# STOLEN BLACK LABOR

## The Political Economy of Domestic Colonialism

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## Chapter One

# Revolution in Political Economy: The Point of View of the Slave

The history of the United States, and the entire history of capitalism, has its origins in the attack on Africa and the unprecedented theft of tens of millions of Africans. This study uncovers the concrete evidence of the amount of wealth stolen from African people by the ruling class of the U.S. over the last four centuries, amounting to a minimum of $4.1 trillion in stolen labor alone.

When the merchants of the various small European principalities began taking Africans as slaves in the late 1400's from the West Coast of Africa, states such as Songhay and Ethiopia far surpassed the organizational, cultural, and economic development of Europe. But the continued depopulation and dislocation of ever futher expanses of Africa caused devastation of those societies and interrupted the history and the economic development of Africa. The procuring of slaves, which represented ready-made capital, human capital for the production of Europe's first commodities on the agricultural labor camps of the "New World," allowed European and North American wealth to accumulate on unheard of scales and laid the basis for the establishment of modern industry, transportation, and a world economy. The slave trade and the slave colonies gave birth to the capitalist class—those who control the labor of masses of people through privately owning and controlling the factories, tools, and distribution system of a complex economy and in whose interest State power functions. In addition, it gave birth to the modern proletariat of the colonizing nations—those who are compelled to work in the factories of the capitalists in order to make a living. The existence of both classes in the imperialist center is contingent on the enslavement of African people and the subsequent colonization of the rest of the world.

The ruling class in the imperialist center has produced analyses, which are called political economy or simply economics, in order to explain the workings of the system of

production and distribution under capitalism and to plan for their security and well-being. The North American left in the imperialist center, which has declared its role as leading the workers of U.S. society, both black and white, has failed to make an independent or revolutionary analysis. This left, which is in essence opportunist, represents a North American petty bourgeois interest and even contends for control of the product of exploitation of the African domestic colony and of other colonies around the world. For this reason, the reality of African history, of African struggle, of African interests are left aside as pure abstraction.

In U.S. bourgeois economics, the wealth stolen from African people is not mentioned at all and the rise of capitalism and the amassing of tremendous wealth in the capitalist centers is ascribed to moral right, personal genius, and racial superiority. Following this lead, the left and working class of European and North American society have failed to come to terms with the real history of the world, the real basis of capitalist wealth. For this reason, the North American working class has never raised itself beyond narrow contention with the ruling class over income levels, and indeed has come out in unity with the ruling class when contending against the revolutionary anti-colonial struggles that challenge the basis of U.S. imperialism. This narrow economism has rightly been called "imperialist economics" by Lenin. African workers in the U.S., on the other hand, because of our historical relation to the rise of capitalism, because of our structural position in the present society, because of our conscious determination to overthrow domestic colonialism, represent the leading force for revolution in the U.S. and are therefore objectively the leadership for the North American (white) working class.

How does the political economy of African people, the world from the point of view of the slave, challenge and transform the dominant political economy advanced by the North American left? For Karl Marx, whose insight led to a brilliant summary of the class struggle of European society, the slave trade and the exploitation of Africa was the first cause, the basic primitive accumulation which led to the rise of the capitalist class in Europe. He said:

> The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement, and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black skins, signalized the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief momentum of primitive accumulation, the necessary condition for capitalist production.[1]

And:

> Direct slavery is just as much the pivot of bourgeois industry as machinery, credits, etc. Without slavery you have no cotton; without cotton you have no modern industry. It is slavery that has given the colonies their value; it is the colonies that have created world trade, and it is world trade that is the precondition of large-scale industry. Thus slavery is an economic category of the greatest importance.
>
> Without slavery North America, the most progressive of countries, would be transformed into a patriarchal country. Wipe out North America from the map of the world and you will have anarchy—the complete decay of modern commerce and civilization. Cause slavery to disappear and you will have wiped America off the map of nations.[2]

And:

> While the cotton industry introduced child slavery in England, it gave in the United States a stimulus to the transformation of the earlier, more or less patriarchal slavery, into a system of commercial exploitation. In fact, the veiled slavery of the wage earners in Europe needed, for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the New World.[3]

Even these truths as laid out by Karl Marx, the "father of scientific socialism," have been ignored by most subsequent Marxists. The weakness of Marx' own perspective was that he was a European who wrote from the perspective and understanding of primitive accumulation of capital as it impacted on Europe's economy and consciousness. Marx used primitive accumulation, the wealth stolen from Africa, to explain European history, but demonstrated only passing interest in the actual process of African history and the relationship of African history and struggle to the development of capitalism. For Marx, the events transpiring in Africa and the African slave labor colonies were merely an abstraction.

This is why he could describe capitalism as a progressive development in history; he would not have been able to do so if he were writing from Angola or as an enslaved African in South Carolina.

The distortions and abstractions put forward by (white) North American and European political economists are based in their material stake in keeping the lid on the truth, on covering up the social and material debt owed to African people in order to keep it for themselves. Such abstractions have meant that these political economists have learned to live with the most outrageous inconsistencies and confusion in their analysis and forced them to explain away statistics which stare them in the face. Before we can draw out the political economy of domestic colonialism, it is necessary to examine these inconsistencies of the dominant political economists in North American society.

The point of view and perspective which guides this re-evaluation of political economy is the point of view of the slave, of the "human capital" which is the primitive accumulation of capitalism. In the endless tomes on political economy to be found in the universities of North America, the slave labors in silence and in the background. But when the slave stands up and speaks, the whole foundation of imperialist economics collapses. African people have been speaking and fighting against our conditions under capitalist exploitation for the last 400 years. In every stage of this struggle, the perspective of the slave destroyed utterly the legitimacy of the ruling class. Today, African people are in a position to destroy the power of that ruling class. The economic structure of the domestic African colony has changed from chattel slavery, to colonialism to primitive neo-colonialism. In this final form, the African population, which has moved away from a peasant economy to the point of being 94 percent proletarian today, is poised in the center of all the major U.S. cities and has produced a working class instrument, the African People's Socialist Party (APSP), to sum up the historical experience of African people and the necessary course for our liberation struggle.

Because of the development of the African proletariat, because of the revolutionary victories in this era of the world-wide struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism, the domestic African colony has produced the leadership and has been able to put forth an analysis which defies the opportunist political economists. Such analysis is



based on the practice and struggle of the domestic African colony for liberation. In the past ten years, the African People's Socialist Party has made giant strides in advancing the liberation struggle by moving forward the mass practice and theoretical summation as the Black Liberation Struggle has moved to rebuild from under the military assault which reached a peak with the U.S. Government's Counter Intelligence Program in the late 60's.

This work has exposed and defeated the various attempts by the white chauvinist left in the U.S. to take control of the future of black people and the metaphysical and despairing politics that have come forth from others in the form of "race politics." The African People's Socialist Party has provided clarity on the crucial question for revolution in the U.S., which is the relation of race to class, and has developed the understanding of domestic colonialism of African people in the U.S. in a way that corresponds to reality, that firmly places the liberation struggle of African people in the camp of all the colonized, neo-colonized, and dependent peoples around the world who are fighting for and winning liberation. We have done more than this, however, for we have taken the concept of primitive accumulation of capital, which receives passing reference in the works of Marx, and proved that this was by no means a temporary crime, simply giving capitalism its "start-up" injection. Instead we have shown that primitive accumulation was the very basis of profit in early capitalism. Moreover, we have shown that this exploitation of the primary producers, of the labor-intensive sector of the work force which is kept out of the high-paid manufacturing sector of the proletariat, has continued to be the very central factor of imperialist wealth today.

This breakthrough in political economy, which has been foreshadowed in the leading analysis produced throughout African history, from Delaney's indictment of the slave system and exposure of the patronizing hypocrisy of the white liberals to DuBois' rewriting of the entire history of Africans in the U.S. and restoring the understanding of black leadership in the struggle against capitalism, could only be completed in the present era. This is the era when the peoples of the so-called lesser developed countries are seizing back our independence and defeating colonialism, neo-colonialism, and economic dependency. We have produced political economy which explains our situation in the

world, known as the Underdevelopment School of Political Economy, which proves that the reason countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America are poor is the bleeding of our economies by the wealthy capitalist centers which gain control over our resources and demolish our native productive capacity. Such reversal in the explanation of political economy is no mere abstract debate; it is an essential element of the development of revolutionary theory, leadership, and programs. The underdevelopment perspective has guided many liberation struggles and is central, for instance, in the policy and planning work of the Nicaraguan Institute for Agrarian Development led by FSLN Commandante Jaime Wheelock.

Today, with the political economy of underdevelopment widely accepted by all revolutionaries because of the ongoing victories of liberation struggles, with the deep crisis of U.S. imperialism caused by the loss of many of its external colonies, with the strategic location and development of the African proletariat which is leading the national liberation struggle against domestic colonialism and against the power of capitalism, the political economy of African Internationalism developed by the African People's Socialist Party takes this analysis an important step further. While the Underdevelopment School shows how imperialism in the 18th and 19th centuries destroyed the economies of many societies, African Internationalism goes back further and explains the very origin of capitalism in the theft of the people and other material resources of Africa. While the Underdevelopment School shows how capitalist countries bullied others with their tremendous wealth, African Internationalism shows how capitalist countries acquired that tremendous wealth. While the Underdevelopment School shows how much of capitalist profits come from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, African Internationalism shows how much of capitalist profit, masked as domestic production within the U.S., is actually the product of the special forms of exploitation of the domestic African colony.

The African Internationalist political economy developed by the African People's Socialist Party and the demand for reparations from the U.S. government reveals that capitalism did not have a benign period of European development followed by spilling over its borders to go around the world in search of profit. It shows that the exploitation of other peoples, the piracy and theft of wealth from the non-white world, was the essential component of capitalist profits in every period, from the first slave ship landing in Africa all the way up to the brutal exploitation of Africans in Brooklyn, New York today. It shows that the exploitation of African people, in Africa and dispersed throughout the world, has been grossly underestimated by the political economists, bourgeois and "left" alike. It draws out the unity of interest and struggle of all African people as well as between African people and other colonized people throughout the world. In particular, African Internationalism develops the understanding put forward by Kwame Nkrumah concerning the nature of domestic colonialism when he said: "The African revolutionary struggle is not an isolated one. It not only forms part of the world socialist revolution, but must be seen in the context of Black Revolution as a whole. In the U.S.A., the Caribbean, and wherever Africans are oppressed, liberation struggles are being fought. In these areas, the Black man is in a condition of domestic colonialism and suffers both on the grounds of class and of color."[4]

The African People's Socialist Party summarizes our understanding of domestic colonialism in Point 3 of our Basic Party Line, which reads:

**3. THE PARTICULAR CHARACTER OF THE AFRICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENT WITHIN THE U.S. IS A STRUGGLE AGAINST U.S. DOMESTIC COLONIALISM.**

Within current U.S. borders, the struggle for African Liberation has a special character. It is a struggle to free ourselves from the terror, poverty, and oppression, which are caused by being ruled in a foreign land by a foreign and alien power, the primary intent of which is to exploit our labor power for the benefit of the U.S. capitalist system and at the expense of collective economic and social development of our people.

This rule of our people by foreigners and aliens for the purpose of exploitation is colonialism, the most barbaric form of economic relationship and government in the world today. It is an economic and governmental form which denies the indisputable human right of self-government. It is an economic and governmental form which distorts social development and denies collective economic development through for-

cibly and arbitrarily molding our social and economic activity in a manner designed to perpetrate and serve the dominant U.S. capitalist economic and social system to which we are illegitimately tied, and from which we are irretrievably estranged.

The colonial domination of our people is unusual and rare in history. It is not the same as the domination of our people as we know it in Africa, where foreigners came to our national homeland and through the use of terror imposed their will upon us on our own land. The colonial domination of our people within current U.S. borders is different; it is not settler-colonialism, which is colonialism that results from people leaving their own native land and setting up an oppressive foreign government which oppresses the traditional occupants of the land in order to exploit them.

U.S. colonialism for African people within current U.S. borders is domestic colonialism.

As African people, forcibly transported to a foreign land by European settlers, also foreign to the land, it is our primary responsibility to struggle for the liberation of Africa, our national homeland, by waging a fierce battle within current U.S. borders against U.S. imperialism and for independence in our lifetime.[5]

Clearly, the African Internationalist political economy reveals that any struggle of the North American working class that seeks to be anything more than bargaining over how to divide up the colonial booty must be tied in to support for the basic, fundamental, and leading force for revolution in the world, the struggle of African people for liberation. For this reason, solidarity work which is principled and accountable to African leadership is the leading stand for North American revolutionaries to take. The research that has gone into this study is part of that solidarity work. The political analysis and principles were put forth by our Party in such central works of the black movement as *The Struggle For Bread, Peace and Black Power* and *Not One Step Backward.* The work of uncovering North American history and the true economic history of U.S. society was taken on by solidarity workers as part of helping to build the International Tribunal on Reparations for Black People in the U.S. Just as the Underdevelopment School of political economy won adherents and researchers and activists within the European and North American left, the political economy of



African Internationalism is challenging North Americans to change all of their understandings. Just as African Internationalism challenges the very legitimacy of the U.S. State, it exposes the many layers of opportunism and complicity in genocide which characterize the white left's ideology and practice. Before beginning the presentation of historical research on reparations owed, it is necessary to touch on some of the main elements of this opportunist ideology, because its assumptions and even language have a grasp on the thinking of most any person who studies political economy.

To begin with, we must go back to the essential outlines of political economy laid out by Karl Marx. Although Marx suffered from Eurocentrism, he was quite precise in describing the workings of capitalism and the laws of capitalist development. His General Law of Capitalist Accumulation is central to an understanding of the contradiction of the capitalist system and how it will be overthrown. However, every Marxist since then has attempted to explain away this law for some very particular reasons. Let us examine why.

Marx showed that the history of class society in Europe went through various stages, that each historical stage corresponded to a basic "mode of production" which was defined by the way things were produced, the relations between classes of people, and the ongoing social struggles. He showed that broadly these stages could be described as communalism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism and communism. Marx showed how all wealth is the product of labor, and if tremendous amounts of wealth are held by certain capitalists, it is only because they have been able to command the labor of millions of people. He showed that the huge machinery and factories controlled by the ruling class were nothing more than crystallized labor, accumulated labor which is known as capital, and that this accumulated capital gives the capitalist ever more power over the small producer and individual laborer who can never compete in efficiency with the big capitalist. In Chapter 25 of *Capital*, then, Marx concludes:

It follows, therefore, that in proportion as capital accumulates, the situation of the worker, be his payment high or low, must grow worse. Finally, the law which always holds the relative surplus population or

industrial reserve army in equilibrium with the extent and energy of accumulation rivets the worker to capital more firmly than the wedges of Vulcan held Prometheus to the rock. It makes an accumulation of misery a necessary condition, corresponding to the accumulation of wealth. Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labor, slavery, ignorance, brutalization, and moral degradation at the opposite pole...[6]

This understanding drawn out by Marx has given our North American and European political economists no end of trouble, not because it was a "prediction that did not come true." On the contrary, since they refuse to understand that capitalism operates in a world economy, they insist on maintaining control of the struggle and of the future in the hands of white workers. But alas, they must confront the fact that the wages, the real wages and living conditions, of white workers have improved considerably over the course of the development of capitalism. Even though the working class of the world, the colonized and economically dependent peoples around the world and in the U.S., has suffered emiseration as the power of capital has advanced, these privileged leftists are at a loss to explain Marx' Law of Capitalist Accumulation because they insist on maintaining that the leading force for revolution must be their so-called advanced working class, meaning that working class in Europe or the white workers in North America. This dogma flies in the face of the entire history of the last 400 years which has seen the rise of the slaves, the leadership of the most exploited, the humanity of those most brutalized.

So how do our self-appointed leaders explain the situation? They either try to maintain that Marx didn't really mean it when he said that the development of capitalism would lead to increasing emiseration of workers or, throwing caution to the wind, they try to declare that indeed the European and North American working class does experience increasing misery. This second tact is rarely attempted seriously, although it is put forth in the vaguest, broadest, and most demogogic forms, playing on the white nationalist prejudices and cynicism of the North American working class. Those who do try to come forth with



statistics to prove emiseration of the North American working class, such as Harry Braverman, can only manage to depress the appearance of the conditions of white workers by mixing in data on their wages with data for the black working class, thus ignoring that black people are unemployed at a rate five times the rate for North American workers or that over three times the percentage of African people fall beneath the official poverty line.

As for the former argument, that Marx didn't really mean it, the radical book shelves are full of them. A good example is Ernest Mandel, whose *Marxist Economic Theory* purports to explain the General Law in this manner:

> The growth in the productivity of labour, which makes possible the growth of relative surplus value, implies the possibility of a slow rise in real wages, if the industrial reserve army is limited, on condition that the equivalent of these increased real wages is produced in an ever shorter period of time, i.e., that wages rise less quickly than productivity...One can indeed observe in history that real wages are generally highest in the countries which have known for some time a substantial growth in the productivity of labor, as compared with countries where this productivity has remained stagnant for a long time or has risen only slowly.[7]

What Mandel has done, with all his "ifs" and "on the condition" is explain away the rise in wages of white workers by claiming the chance population growth levels are the key factor, combined with rising productivity, or efficiency of production, in the capitalist centers. He ignores, therefore, the very basic fact that productivity, based on improved machinery and techniques, is built on the backs of human labor—and as more and more labor is concentrated by the capitalists, it provides the capital for the development of science, technology, and machinery. He has proposed the rise of productivity somehow running ahead of the rise of wages for white workers. Off of what? The self-generating growth of capital? It doesn't happen that way. Human labor from the colonies provides the capital for advanced production in the center. For white social chauvinists like Mandel, the problem with Latin America and the rest of the colonized and underdeveloped world is that they don't have enough capitalism, they don't have the

concentrated productivity that the coming of capitalism will afford. In this, he unites with imperialist development theorists from Walt Rostow to Ronald Reagan. As the African People's Socialist Party explained in *The Burning Spear* in January 1982 :

> The problem confronting African people, and all underdeveloped peoples, is not that we have *not* been drawn into the mainstream of capitalist "progress," but that we have. The mainstream of capitalist development is seen in the hunger and starvation of people on the great Continent of Africa and Asia, the violence in the lives of the peoples of Latin America, the wretchedness of our conditions here in the U.S. This *is* the mainstream of capitalism in the twentieth century—misery for the overwhelming majority of humanity—the conditions of our life becoming ever more precarious as the crisis of imperialism deepens.[8]

The point that all genuine revolutionaries recognize, then, is that the imperialist division of labor is central to the functioning of the capitalist system. As the *Main Resolution* of the First Congress of the African People's Socialist Party states, "the resources, the wealth, the near slave-labor of the vast majority of the peoples of the world have been the basis for the development, not only of the wealth of the white ruling class, but of the entire North American society."[9] Thus the stolen labor of African people, the destruction of local markets and the dumping of excess goods on African people, the enforced conditions which have always meant paying African workers below the value of our labor power, that is below the amount that is necessary in order to successfully survive and reproduce, constitute an ongoing condition of genocide, of increasing emiseration, of domestic colonialism.

It is important to begin a review of the case for reparations for African people in the U.S. with this exposure of the corrupt chauvinist politics of the white left which so often masks itself as "multinational." For it has been their access to resources which has allowed a hundred publications to flourish while the black movement was under the withering fire of State attack; it is their assumptions and arguments which fill the ears of any progressive-leaning person; it is their research which has served to obscure and distort the truth. And if this is not challenged, they will succeed in their



bid to take over as the new ruling class when the decay of the present rulers reaches a certain point, a new ruling class of white national socialism which will fight to hold the resources which have been piled up in the centers of imperialism over centuries of piracy and exploitation, instead of moving forward to an equitable distribution of resources based on the needs of the peoples of the world, the contribution to this wealth by the people of the world, and the human understanding of justice based on genuine socialist internationalism. Would the white left attempt such a thing? Look at the prediction of another Marxist, John Eaton, of the British Communist Party, in *Political Economy*:

> The national product of capitalist Britain would clearly provide the starting point for the development of a new socialist economy. It is, as it were, the base line from which the higher standards of material wealth available for everyone in a socialist society would be derived.[10]

These seductive fantasies for the British workers ignore the fact that the "national product of capitalist Britain" has 450 years of slave trading and colonial exploitation behind it, without which Britain's wealth is incomprehensible. If Eaton regards this plundered wealth as something other than the natural right of the British people, he certainly does not say so. In fact, the prospect of inheriting this vast wealth is what has drives these European and North American leftists to obscure the history, to spin theories which bear no relation to the concrete reality, to the statistical evidence, or to history. This is the material basis of opportunism, an opportunism which has dominated the working class of the capitalist centers from the beginning of capitalism.

The campaign for Reparations Now is based on history that is written by the slave, on the clear light of African Internationalism which reveals the true material relations between classes and peoples in today's world. The campaign for reparations has fired the imagination and initiative of African workers who understand its just truth, just as it has made many North American opportunists squirm with discomfort since it is a demand which brings out the truth, which puts the leadership and power in the struggle back in the hands of African people. It exposes the material reality of African people and the righteousness of the African struggle for liberation.

The information that has been gathered in the following chapters does not require tortured arguments to explain away factors that just don't fit, to distort reality. The statistics and testimonies show conclusively that the capture of African people and our enslavement in the Western hemisphere is central to the first profits of capitalism, in the beginnings of the banks, factories, and the world economy. They show how the struggle of African people led to the collapse of the slave system, yet the capitalists by then used their concentrated wealth to transform the exploitation of Africans to domestic colonialism based on peasant labor in the South while they extended the system of colonialism throughout the world. They show how the resistance of African people to these conditions again caused a collapse of the structures of exploitation, although African people were still not strategically placed to be able to overturn the whole capitalist system. They show how African people's material conditions since World War II have changed with the increasing proletarianization of the African masses.

Today this process of proletarianization has not caused colonialism to wither away, as some of our Marxists suppose, but has intensified the exploitation and the struggle for African liberation. The exploitation of African people has had certain fundamentally consistent elements from the beginning of primitive accumulation—being the basis of capitalist profits but kept out of the traditionally defined wage-labor and capital relations of production in the capitalist factories—but it has passed through stages until the African working class is today poised on the edge of the most decisive struggle of the entire 400 years of colonial terror, the struggle for independence, socialism, and the overturning of the entire imperialist system.



## Chapter Two

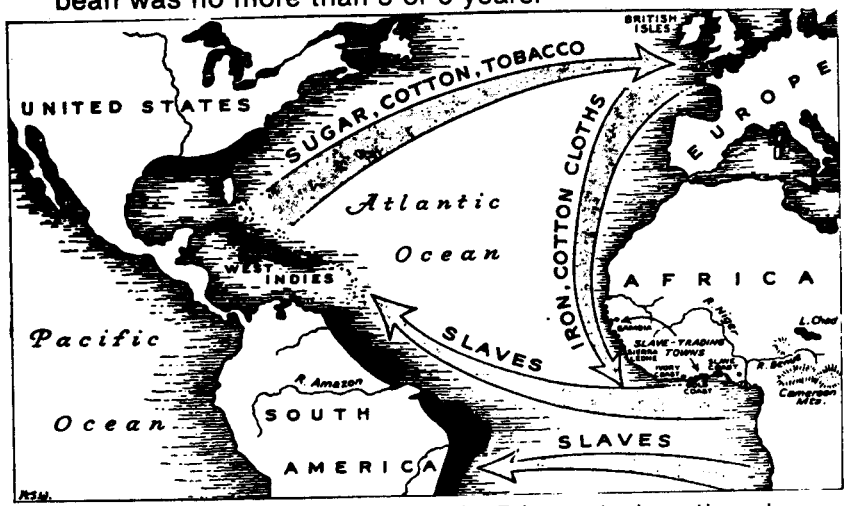
# Chattel Slavery: Primitive Accumulation of Capitalism, 1619 to 1865

In the course of this chapter, the amount of reparations owed to African people by the U.S. government and ruling class due to the period of chattel slavery will be calculated. More importantly, the process of this calculation will reveal the nature of the slave system, the way that capitalism came into being, and the social struggle for freedom which African people carried out.

**Primitive Accumulation.** From the time African people were first enslaved by the Portuguese in the 1490's and first brought to North America by the Dutch in 1619 until the end of chattel slavery in 1865, African people's labor was stolen to provide the primitive accumulation for capitalism. In the early sugar plantations of the Caribbean, the concentration camp labor colonies were infamous centers of extraction of wealth from the very bodies of African laborers. The essential law of profit which was exposed by Marx is that the capitalist pays the worker for his or her "labor power," that is, only so much as is necessary for the laborer to survive and reproduce him/herself through raising children for the future generation of laborers. The capitalist then works the laborer to a much greater degree than paying for the value of this labor power requires, and makes a profit by selling the commodities thus produced. Such a system, however, only operated after enough wealth had been accumulated to give the capitalist the power to control production by controlling the tools of advanced production, factories, and then only operated for white workers.

But the primitive accumulation of capital, the amassing of wealth in the form of goods to sell and transportation means and factories, was based on a much more cruel system, chattel slavery. In the slavery system, workers were not compelled to come work for the capitalist because he con-

trolled great factories, known as the means of production. No, African workers were compelled to work for the primitive merchant capitalists because they used extreme force and violence, carried out a degree of kidnapping and human cruelty never before seen on the face of the earth. Moreover, African workers held as slaves were not at all paid the value of our labor power, but literally worked to death. The early European capitalists, after driving Native peoples (American Indians) off the land, did not even bother to recompense African laborers enough to come close to survival and reproduction levels, since they could be replaced by new importations of African people from the Continent. Life expectancy of an African worker who got to the Caribbean was no more than 5 or 6 years.




For Britain in the 16th and 17th centuries, the slave trade and the sugar triangular trade was the basis for the concentration of capital leading to the first factories and the beginnings of the modern capitalist system. By 1725, Britain had 163 ships in the slave trade and by 1750, 396 ships were taking Africans as slaves.[1] Why did the slave merchants set up plantation colonies in the Americas, which required a perilous and expensive ocean voyage, instead of setting up plantations right in Africa, only a few weeks journey down the coast from Europe? Because they could not penetrate the strong civilizations of Africa and were terrified to venture beyond the coast. In the Americas, they could not enslave the Native population because the Native people knew the land and could escape from bondage. But Native people



were decimated by diseases brought by Europeans and were not able to offer completely successful resistance to European coastal settlements. So the Europeans adapted the method of slowly bleeding Africa through taking cargoes of humans from the coast and setting them to work in an alien land.

Bristol merchants derived profit from the slave trade which was invested in further ship-building. Liverpool concentrated its slave profits in 10 trading houses which were then responsible for the establishment of the industrial district of Lancaster, which led all of England in textile and shipbuilding in 1790. The history of England is comprised of the central dependence on the trade in African flesh for the primitive accumulation of capitalism. Indeed, European Wars in the 16th through 18th centuries were fought for control and supremacy of the slave trade. The Treaty of Asiento of 1713 established the British monopoly on the slave trade after they had established their naval superiority. Such British heroes as Sir Francis Drake were knighted because of their successful piracy and gangsterism in the struggles for the treasures of African production in the Caribbean.

In speaking of the central role that Britain played in the slave trade and the consequent boom of British wealth and industry, we may call into question the humanistic boasts England has made in voluntarily abolishing the slave trade in the early 19th century. The reality is that Britain abolished the slave trade, and began patrolling the African coast, because they had already successfully populated their colonies with African laborers. The British capitalists reasoned that if they could breed African slaves in the slave colonies, and stop the shipment of Africans from Africa, they would be depriving their competitors, the Spanish, Portuguese, and French, of acquiring this critical form of human capital to enrich their colonies. Indeed, during the entire early capitalist years, when commodity trading of agricultural goods was the leading economic enterprise, the critical element was the control of African labor which produced this wealth. Britain abolished the slave trade to secure their economic advantage, and nothing more.

In North America, the rising capitalist class profited off of the labor of Africans in the Caribbean, especially through their shipping centers of Boston and Baltimore which transported Caribbean products to North America. In addition, more and more African workers in North America itself

were set to growing commodities for export, beginning with tobacco, sugar, and rice and by the end of the 18th century turning full force to massive cotton production. The dimensions of this production were overwhelming to a European world which was just moving out of subsistence production, to a world that saw no large scale manufacture of factories, to a world that had not seen a global economy. The description of a European traveller upon first encountering the New Orleans levee in 1848 gives graphic clarity to this:

> It must be seen to be believed; and even then, it will require an active mind to comprehend acres of cotton bales standing upon the levee, while miles of drays are constantly taking it off to the cotton presses, where the power of steam and screws are constantly being applied to compress the bales into a lesser bulk, at an almost inconceivable rate per day, while all around (bales) are piled up in miniature mountains, which other miles of drays are taking on shipboard, and yet seem unable to reduce in size or quantity, either here or upon the levee; for boats are constantly arriving, so piled up with cotton, that the lower tier of bales on deck are in the water; and as the boat is approaching, it looks like a huge raft of cotton bales, with the chimneys and steam pipe of an engine sticking up out of the center.[2]



**Was the slave system feudalism?** Many North American political economists seek to prove a simplistic and schematic notion of the stages of social development by arguing that slavery was a feudal system. Using the Marxist precedents that show the ways that capitalism was a system that pulled together large productive enterprises and broke up the feudal subsistence farming of the European countryside, they argue that the conflict of the Civil War was one of the Northern capitalists seeking to break up the feudal Southern planter economy in order to spread capitalism to the whole country. Everyone from the Communisty Party-U.S.A. and the Socialist Workers Party to the social democratic Marxists such as Eugene Genovese depicts the conflict as between stagnant rural feudal economy and the progressive advancing Northern capitalist economy. These arguments are nothing but an apology for the complicity of all classes of North American society in the exploitation of African labor, since they isolate the horrors of slavery to a condemnation of the slave owners and praise the capitalist class as the liberators of the slaves. This is why the CP-USA named its International Brigade sent to fight fascism in Spain as the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, to put forward the Northern capitalist Lincoln as a hero for American workers and to attempt to unite with other "progressive" and "democratic" capitalists.

In the real world, however, slavery was in no sense feudalism. In fact, slavery was the very essence of the capitalist system. The resistance of African people to slavery was at all times the stinging indictment of the capitalist system as a whole while the left leaders of the North American working class were simply contending for their place in North American society. As the observation of the New Orleans levee graphically shows, slave labor was not a throwback to a mode of production of Europe of 1,000 years earlier; rather it was the primary accumulation of wealth that provided the entire economic boom of early capitalism. As B.I. Koval pointed out in his study of slavery in Brazil: "Nascent capitalism in the leading countries of Western Europe shunned no means for its own enrichment, not even those which would appear to be historically defunct. Thus capital revived and infused new life into the institution of slavery."[3] The slavery of capitalism only shares a common generic name with the slavery known in earlier periods of Europe and in other continents where

systems of labor obligations characterized mass economies.

The first European capitalist production occurred in Venice in the 14th century after Crusaders plundered the Mid-east. But this line of primitive accumulation could not be maintained; the bleeding of the Mid-east could not be harnessed the way the slave colonies of America were. So capitalism died out in Venice. Chattel slavery could be started without the development of complex tools or factories, the traditionally defined "capital" which the capitalist controls in the economic hierarchy. Thus, the slave himself or herself represented ready-made capital, advanced means of production which could be procured by force of arms in Africa.

Because slaves did not require complex tools for plantation labor, the economy is known as a labor-intensive system. It was labor-intensive plantation farming which allowed the merchant class to concentrate the resources necessary for the first major long-term investments in the factory system. The slave labor system produced a tremendous supply of commodities with very low technological input. Under slave labor, wealth was not extracted at the level of consumption. That is, slaves were producers of goods for export, but were not used as a market for commodities as is the case with the industrial proletariat.

Slave producers were a relatively constant element of production in that they were organized in plantations over long periods of time, not hired and fired according to the immediate tasks and competition between producers. Planters did not increase their profits through technical innovation and changes in the labor force, but rather increased production by intensification of labor, gang labor, and by migrating to new and richer soils. The only way that the labor force was characterized by some degree of mobility was when excess African workers were rented out by planters to other planters or nearby industrialists. The tremendous profits realized from slave labor, the increasing efficiency of huge gang labor plantations, and the mobility provided by the use of rental systems show that the slave system was not a stagnant and outmoded labor system as Genovese maintains, but rather a booming part of capitalism. What brought the slave system to an end was not simply some internal weakness in the abstract of the planter economy or the opposition of the Northern capitalist, but



rather the resistance and rebellion of the Africans held in bondage.

U.S. laws were used to enforce the slave system and the rule of private property. In the first place, slavery itself was legal, and for any African to resist that condition was a violation of the law. It was also illegal for Africans to learn to read and write, as today is still enforced by unofficial laws and practices. In Norfolk, Virginia in 1853, a Mrs. Douglas was arrested for teaching Africans to read. The judgement against her read:

> Upon an indictment found against you for assembling with negroes to instruct them to read and write, and for associating with them in an unlawful assembly, you were found guilty...The Court is not called upon to vindicate the policy of the law in question for, so long as it remains upon the statute book and unrepealed, public and private justice and morality require that it should be respected and sustained. There are persons, I believe, in our community, opposed to the policy of the law in question. They profess to believe that universal intellectual culture is necessary to religious instruction and education and that such culture is suitable to a state of slavery...It is not true that our slaves cannot be taught religious and moral duty, without being able to read the Bible and use the pen...There might have been no occasion for such enactments in Virginia or elsewhere on the subject of negro education but as a matter of self defense against the schemes of Northern incendiaries and the outcry against holding our slaves in bondage...They scattered far and near pocket handkerchiefs and other similar articles, with frightening engravings, and printed over with anti-slavery nonsense, with a view to work upon the feeling and ignorance of our negroes, who otherwise would have remained comfortable and happy...[4]

Likewise, the Dred Scott decision rendered by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1857 extended the defense of slavery to the states which had formerly abolished that system. This decision maintained that Africans were not citizens of the U.S. and therefore not protected by the rights inscribed in the Constitution, that any slave brought North by his or her owner remained a slave, and any slave who escaped to the

North could be apprehended by federal or state authorities and returned to the owner.

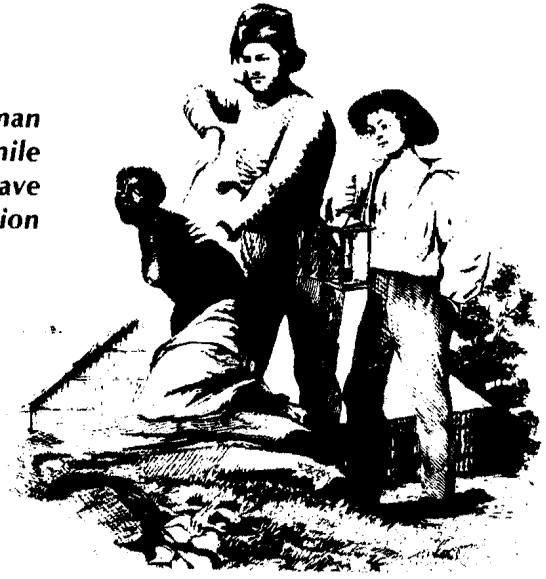
Wealth stolen from African people held as slaves in the U.S. and the rest of the diaspora was not a pre-capitalist anachronism, but instead was the essential factor in the explosive growth of capitalism on a world scale, in the enriching of European and North American societies, in developing the capacity of their petty rulers to dominate the people of the world because of their superior means of production and war equipment. As sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein says, "Coerced and semi-coerced semi-wage labor is, and has been from the beginning of capitalism as a world system, a phenomenon of peripheral areas of the capitalist world economy, while contractual labor is concentrated (largely but not exclusively) in core areas."[5]

**Calculating the stolen wealth.** Before attempting a qualitative calculation of the amount of wealth stolen from African people, it is necessary to make an obvious but essential warning. These calculations measure stolen wealth, the wealth used by the capitalist class to assure its supreme power, but there can be no quantitative, monetary measure of the countless horrors attendant on the slave trade. There is no calculation here for massive murders, tortures, brandings, rapes, castrations, tearing of children from their mothers, and destruction of unborn generations through genocide. When we draw out the reality of the slave trade and plantation labor, the moral and human revulsion at the scene defies all calculation. But calculate we must,



for in the face of the overwhelming terror and debasity that our inquiries uncover, we too often give up any attempt at measuring the real reason these horrors were committed and in the end actually underestimate the centrality and importance of the slave trade to the rise of the capitalist class and the wealth which is the U.S. If we can show the slave trade to be the very foundation of the U.S. power, of the U.S. wealth, do we not call into question the very legitimacy of all present social institutions that exist in the United States?

*Captive African woman being branded while next generation of slave owners takes instruction*



The material base of society, the way wealth is produced and exchanged, gives rise to all social institutions, from the church to the schools to the government to the forms of cultural expression. Certainly the demonstration that African labor was the basis of the rise of capitalism has the most profound implications. Besides the fact that African science and culture had been critical to Europe's cultural awareness for the previous 2000 years and more, African wealth stolen in the form of the slave labor system was the economic base which supported all the institutions of European and North American society. From the robust bourgeois optimism of Beethoven symphonies to the explosion of urban architecture in the 19th century to the Protestant Reformation and the bourgeois political reforms, every development described as "progressive" in the explosion of European and American wealth and power must be re-

defined as resting on the backs of African people whose labor made the wealth of this society. Needless to say, European and North American workers were forced to work in extremely brutal conditions, but it can be shown that the brutality of the slave system had no equal, and that this system extracted the greatest amount of wealth, the critical input of wealth that was the material base of capitalist society. And this material basis, this critical underpinning of the political economy of the capitalist world, continues to today, in an extended and sophisticated form under domestic colonialism within the U.S. and colonialism in its various forms throughout the world.

By the 19th century, the planter class in the United States developed commodity farming for export to the highest level known in world history at the time. Plantations with hundreds of slaves and thousands of acres were not unknown. While some of the European settlers were sent off for subsistence farming as a way to remove dissident groups from Europe, the real value of the Americas to Europe and later to the rising U.S. capitalist class was the commodity farming. Before the U.S. revolution, African labor was used to send 100 million pounds of tobacco to Britain each year, providing more than 1/3 of U.S. exports, followed closely by rice. During the Revolution, Britain found a main tactic of disrupting the U.S. economy in driving away slaves from their plantations, and thus kidnapped 30,000 slaves from South Carolina. With the defeat of Britain however, the U.S. capitalists were able to rebuild the commodity farming as well as increase their trade, and thus profits, with the West Indies ten-fold.[6] With the winning of the war for independence, the U.S. capitalist class embarked on an intensified commodity production drive and found the greatest profits in cotton, which could be efficiently processed with the Cotton Gin after 1790.

Attempting to measure the amount of wealth extracted from African labor brings up many difficulties. In political economy, the way data are treated and the conclusions reached depend on the questions asked. Unfortunately, the question of slavery and the exploitation of African labor has mainly been studied by North American academics, and the raging arguments have been between liberals and reactionaries. The reactionaries, such as Ulrich B. Phillips, argue that slavery was a civilizing influence on African "savages,"



that the plantation owners were losing money by keeping slaves but carried them out of a sense of moral obligation. The liberals, such as Alfred Conrad and John Meyer, carry out extensive research to quantify the amount of profit that planters indeed did receive and argue that the planters fought for their system because of economic self-interest. None of them, however, set out to determine the whole amount of wealth taken from African labor since their point of view is the debate among different classes of North American (white) society.

The main error encountered in the various measurements of the profitability of slavery to the planter class is that they obscure the wealth stolen from African people by failing to account for all of the surplus value they produced. What is surplus value? When a worker is set to labor on raw materials or the soil, she or he produces value. What small amount is paid to the laborer for survival is only a part of the value thus produced, and the rest is surplus value to be used by the ruling class in any way it sees fit. The tremendous surplus values created by the Africans held as slaves were divided between the planters and other non-producing classes, who got rich from no other source of wealth but the slaves. When you do find evidence that some planters were not making a good profit or were indeed going into debt, you find in their journals long complaints against the banks and commodity traders who were subduing them through superior access to the world market which they could manipulate to their advantage. As the *Vicksburg Daily Whig* editorialized in 1865:

"By mere supineness, the people of the South have permitted the Yankees to monopolize the carrying trade, with its immense profits. We have yielded to them the manufacturing business...We have acquiesced in the claims of the North to do all the importing, and most of the exporting business, for the whole Union...Meantime, the South remains passive—in a state of torpidity—making cotton bales for the North to manufacture, and constantly exerting ourselves to increase the production as much as possible."[7]

It was these sectors, the commodity traders, bankers, and insurers, who were on the rise in the United States. The early manufacturers and industrialists were able to invest in building of machinery directly from the profits of the commodity trade—with the first factories often built by the com-

modity traders themselves. These first factories were involved with textile production and ship-building, that is, enterprises directly connected to the slave trade and slave labor. To the African held as slave, and to the African villages and cities robbed of their productive powers and their ability to develop in their own interests, it little mattered whether the stolen wealth of their labor was taken by the planters or other parasite sectors along the line. Therefore, in addition to studying the statistics related to planters, we will attempt to assess the amount of wealth taken by the Northern capitalists from the labor of African people.

GINNING COTTON BY STEAM

In addition, the contribution of African labor is significant for early non-agricultural enterprises. First of all, the productivity of the machinery, the ability of the machines to multiply the output of the laborer, was based on the wealth accumulated from the plantation labor that was then crystallized in the capital wielded by the factory owner. That is, the existence of a bale of cotton can be measured in social terms by calculating the amount of labor which has gone into producing that bale. The fact that labor has been expended to create that bale of cotton, or "worked up" in the bale, can be expressed in the term of crystallized labor.



This is what capital is. For example, the labor of one African held as slave in Mississippi in the 1850's would produce 8 bales of cotton per year, each weighing 400 pounds. The planter and commodity traders became rich by selling the cotton at 12¢ to 15¢ a pound or up to $60 per bale. The eight bales of cotton which the African has brought into existence through his/her labor have provided $480 for the planter and brokers. The cost of providing starvation subsistence to the slave was perhaps $20 per year, and perhaps another $60 would have to be expended for plantation maintenance per slave worked. So the capitalists would have cleared $400 on the labor of each African. The $400 which was produced by the slave represents real social values, values which are contained in the cotton, values which represent the crystallized labor of the slave.

And the social values created by African slave labor, the tremendous profits from plantation commodity farming, represented the greatest wealth of the early capitalist society, the place where fortunes were made and the critical point in the economy where capital was accumulated for investment in massive transportation and industrial enterprises. In order for the capitalist to make primitive factories and then more complex ones, he had to control ever greater amounts of crystallized labor, or capital, which we shall demonstrate was in the first place derived from African slave labor. So the multiplication of wealth, the ability of the capitalist to amass great amounts of crystallized labor and use it to command ever greater armies of labor, of North American workers as well as the ever-growing frontiers of colonial conquests, was a benefit which the capitalist got from the enslavement of African people.

Secondly, about 5 percent of African people held as slaves were put to work in many non-agricultural enterprises; they worked in the textile factories of South Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia; in the saltworks of Clay County, Kentucky; in the iron and lead mines of Caldwell and Crittenden Counties; in mills, iron furnaces, tobacco factories; as dock workers in New Orleans, Savannah, Charleston, and Norfolk; in the building trades erecting huge Southern buildings like those famous in Charleston and the wrought iron works of New Orleans; cutting forests, quarrying marble; grading highways; mining coal; digging canals; sawing lumber; bridging streams;[8] crewing keel boats and river boats; loading and repairing

vessels; warehousing cargo; paving and cleaning streets; digging sewers and hauling garbage.[9] And on the plantation, the labor of African people was used for more than commodity production. Slaves also cleared forests, improved land, grew food crops, sewed, cared for North American children, cooked, and cleaned house for planters. On the plantation, an incredible 61 percent of the African population was part of the labor force, since slaves were expected to more than earn their keep by age 9 and were worked until they died.

## PROFITS ACCRUING TO PLANTERS.

The possible ways of measuring this stolen wealth are many. To boil them down to two basic approaches: you can estimate the amount of wealth produced for the planters in each year of production for each slave and make a simple calculation to multiply out the amount of wealth produced by the population by the number of years of bondage (known as "quantification of labor units"). Or you can look at the overall figures for annual sales of the major commodities produced by slave labor, deduct an estimated amount of value added by management and transport functions not carried out by Africans, and get a rough idea of the amount of wealth produced for the planters. Remember, however, that both of these calculations only give you the amount of wealth produced for the planters. Later in the chapter, the estimate for the other recipients of slave surplus value will be made.



**Estimate through quantification of slave labor units.**

The estimation of the amount of labor extracted per African per year requires first the calculation of data from many sample plantation records in various parts of the country. The data from the 19th century are most complete and will be used for the first calculation; then we can calculate back to the earlier two centuries based on an estimate of the proportion of wealth produced in those centuries compared to the 19th.

Estimates are made based on three kinds of data: the profitability of investment in slaves from the records of planters; direct division of cotton crop production by the number of slaves put to work on it; and records of rental of slaves by owners to other industrial and agricultural hiring agents.

**Profitability.** The investment in slaves was the highest return investment available in the United States in the 19th century. While railroad investments yielded between 4 and 7 percent return (that is, a $100 stock would be sold for $104 to $107 in a year), the purchase of slaves returned wealth per year at between 5 percent to 9 percent to 14 percent[10] and 20 percent and even higher.[11] While the price of an African sold into slavery fluctuated throughout the century, as did the price of cotton, the differences through the century are more minor than those seen in the inflation explosion of the past few decades. The price of a "prime field hand"was an average of $700 in 1828, $1000 in 1839, $900 in 1848, $1200 in 1853, and $1800 in 1860. The maintenance cost was incredibly low, about $20 per year for each African worker. This is because the planter maintained the African labor force at starvation level, giving back to the worker less than the value of his/her labor power, or the amount needed to survive and reproduce. Africans maintained small gardens, foraged illegally in the woods, and maintained an underground economy in order to survive under such conditions. The starvation level of existence imposed on the enslaved Africans can be seen in the development of so-called soul food which included the intestines, feet, tails, and ears of pigs and the necks and feet of chickens. Averages determin-

ed by Conrad and Meyer from information on profitability of slave labor yield an estimate of the extracted wealth, for the planter alone, of $117 to $252 per year from each African slave.[12]

**Division of Plantation Crop Profit by Slave Labor Force.**

Woodman makes sample calculations of the amount of profit produced per slave.[13] In Issaquena County in 1860, an average of 8 bales of cotton was produced by each productive African, and that is without deducting house servants, blacksmiths, carpenters, etc. Each bale of cotton has 400 lbs. The profit in 1860 was $350.00 per slave. Charles Snydor comes up with the figure of $11,000 profit produced by 30 slaves, that is $366 per African laborer.[14] Kenneth Stampp, in *The Peculiar Institution*, estimates $250 per year.[15] Some of the higher figures may represent slightly inflated estimates because they are taken from the highly productive Southern plantations towards the end of the chattel slave era. Nevertheless, Mississippi and Louisiana plantations, surpassed by the mammoth plantations of Texas, did account for a tremendous production of wealth in that period.

**Estimates from the Rental of Slaves.** Slaves were rented out by owners just as mules or ploughs might be. This practice of rental, which was on the rise in the 1850's and 1860's, was a way that the planter class adapted to the demands of the economy and allowed them to make the labor force more mobile and applied where productivity was highest. Again, the average figures available on the rate of slave hire (paid to the owner) are $125 per year.[16] Of course, this is the amount of money paid to the owner simply for the fact that he owns the African, but the renter also expects to get a return on the $125 spent in getting more wealth produced by the rented instrument. Using a conservative estimate on the amount of return expected on hired labor or rented farm animal as 100 percent (that is, the enterprise may expect to spend one third on hired labor, one third on raw materials, and keep one third as surplus value; so the labor rental and surplus value are equal quantities), then we may estimate the return on the labor of the African who is rented out as $250 total for the owner and renter.

The estimated profit from women slaves was lower than for men when direct field labor is compared. But the estimate of their value was increased by the fact that they were expected to also produce children, which increased the wealth of the owner. In this way, their values were equalized.

From this information, it is safe to take a broad average of $250 per year as the amount of wealth produced by African laborers in the years 1790 to 1860. Combining this with population data[17] on the African labor force, we can generate the following table:

**Wealth Produced for the Planter Class by African Labor, 1790-1860**

| Census year | Population | Slave-years in the decade | Slave years in production, i.e. number of slaves working (61% of population) | Amount of wealth produced (slave-years in production times $250 wealth produced by each) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1790 | 698,000 | 6,980,000 | 4,257,800 | $1,064,000,000 |
| 1800 | 893,000 | 8,930,000 | 5,447,300 | 1,362,000,000 |
| 1810 | 1,191,000 | 11,910,000 | 7,265,100 | 1,816,000,000 |
| 1820 | 1,538,000 | 15,380,000 | 9,381,800 | 2,346,000,000 |
| 1830 | 2,009,000 | 20,090,000 | 12,254,900 | 3,138,000,000 |
| 1840 | 2,487,000 | 24,870,000 | 15,170,700 | 3,793,000,000 |
| 1850 | 3,205,000 | 32,050,000 | 19,550,000 | 4,888,000,000 |
| 1860* | 3,954,000 | 3,954,000 | 2,411,900 | 602,000,000 |

*only count 1 year as war broke out

Adding up the right-hand column, then, we came up with $19 billion in wealth produced in this 70 year period in 1850 dollars. While the same detailed data are not available for the previous 150 years, it is possible to get a rough estimate by comparing the Gross National Product and the amount of commodity production in those years. The income was less since there were fewer Africans in the U.S. in the 17th and early 18th century. But the major commodity crops, tobacco, rice, sugar, and indigo, were raised largely through slave labor. We can safely add half again as much as the 1790-1860 estimate to come up with a total of $30 billion produced by African labor for the planter class during the period of chat-

tel slavery. This leaves out, of course, the central production of wealth by Africans held captive in the Caribbean and Brazil and Central America who were producing the riches of the sugar triangular trade and have been estimated by the people of the Caribbean as contributing $200 billion more, the bulk of it for Europe.

The figure of $30 billion in 19th century dollars may not seem so impressive in today's gigantic capitalist market, where a national rail strike can cost $½ billion per day. But this was in the era of early mercantile capitalism, when fortunes were counted in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, when the U.S. government budget was at its peak in the 1850's only $70 million, and the total U.S. property was valued at $16 billion. This was $30 billion at a time when economic surplus was just beginning to be produced; $30 billion off the sweat of African brows which far surpassed the surplus derived from any other venture at that time.

### Estimate of Values by Counting Up Crops Produced by African Labor.

The estimate for wealth produced by African labor held in chattel slavery in the 19th century can be made by calculating the amount of income produced by cotton sales and deducting 4 percent (suggested by Alfred Conrad and John Meyer in *The Economics of Slavery*)[18] as the amount accounted for in the price by transportation and management values. The cotton crop sales for the years 1790-1860 add up to $3.5 billion. The sales of other crops grown by African people, rice, corn in Southern states, sugar, molasses, comes to about half that amount, or $1.6 billion, leading to a total production of these crops of $5.25 billion. While four percent must be deducted to account for transportation costs, it is also necessary to add in an equal amount for the labor values taken in other enterprises, as described on page 27. So this figure of $5.25 billion falls somewhat below the $19 billion calculated in the other method, but it compares well enough since it gives the same magnitude of an estimate. Some difference can be explained because the statistics of the era were not extremely accurate and many actual cotton sales were under-reported in order to avoid taxes and tarriffs, thus causing the expected higher results on the labor unit estimate.

This calculation, then, of $19 billion for 1790 to 1860 in



profits for the planters, cross-checks well with the estimate determined by Jim Marketti in the *Review of Black Political Economy*[19] in which he calculated the amount of unpaid black equity, that is, the amount of built up human capital based on various estimates on the rate of return on the investment in Africans as slaves. After a series of complicated calculations, Marketti comes up with a figure of unpaid equity as between $7 billion and $40 billion in 1860 dollars, for the period of 1790 to 1860. Thus our conclusion of $19 billion falls within Marketti's estimate. He also concludes that if this figure is brought up to 1972 with compounded interest, the amount owed to African people is up to $995 billion by 1972. Note, however, that Marketti repeats the error of other political economists in ignoring the amount of wealth that accrued to other non-productive dividers of African's surplus values. The following section, then, deals with this important sector.

### Surplus Value Extracted by Merchants and Bankers

In proving the essential contribution of African labor to the primitive accumulation of capital, it is necessary to do more than understand the way that Southern planters became rich off of our labor. Africans did more than provide a genteel life for the self-styled bourbons. We must examine the way that the wealth produced by African labor was used by the Northern merchants in order to start up industry and banking and the basic infrastructure of capitalism. So far, we have only looked at the profits accruing to planters based on their record books. But let us look closer at the planter's annual records. He must review his investment in raw materials (seeds, materials such as hoes and plows, land), the cost of maintaining his labor force (the cost of maintaining Africans held as slaves was kept at a bare minimum, no more than $20 per year), and the payment of interest on the money borrowed for purchase of slaves, land, equipment, as well as commissions paid to brokers for the sale of the crop. This last category, however, is also an unproductive sector, it is payments to the sector of Northern merchants and capitalists. If this sector produces no wealth but becomes wealthy, the only source of their wealth is the stolen labor of African people. The surplus values which Africans are forced to produce are being divided between the planters and the merchants. Let us look at these various sectors of capitalists and what amount of

surplus value they take.

In the first place there was the factor. The factor was a business agent existing in Southern towns and cities who was responsible for selling the cotton or other crops for export. Factors also became intimate with all aspects of the planter's business, often loaning him money, making general purchases, and passing on business news. The commission charged by the factor, according to Harold Faulkner[20] was 1 to 2½ percent. According to Woodman[21] the higher percent was the more common. The factor, however, was small in the overall business world and Woodman asserts that: "In reality, the power behind King Cotton's rickety throne was located in New York and Liverpool rather than in New Orleans, Mobile, Savannah, and Charleston. If the metaphor may be extended further, the factors were little more than royal retainers with no more power than the throne they served."[22] In addition, the planter had to pay out 2.5 to 4 percent for storage, weighing, and insurance.

Next in line to take a cut of the values produced by African labor was the large commodity broker in the Northern cities and in Europe. Brokers evolved out of the occupation of auctioneers in selling the products of slave labor in early tobacco warehouses. When the initial stockbroker activity was started in New York with the Funding Act of 1790, it was the auctioneers along with some merchants who were the first dealers in such paper.[23] The entire commercial boom of Europe was based on brokerage houses which speculated in buying and selling commodities from the American colonies. Vincent Nolte[24] describes in detail the international trade in cotton bales which was the life blood of such firms as Victor Elie Lefevre & Sons of Rouen, Barandon & Co. of London, Cropper in Liverpool, and Hottinger and Co. in Havre. These brokerage firms, as well as the thriving firms of New York and Boston, were the earliest merchants profiting off of the labor of African people and would be the primary investors in the rising banks and industries. These speculators drove up the price of cotton, extracting another 10 percent of the value of the crop as sold by the planter, over and above the costs of shipping.

After the brokers come the bankers. These are the capitalists who advanced the money for the purchase of land and slaves at an annual interest rate of 11.5 percent to 18.5 percent, or taking another 3 percent of the amount the crop sold for in an average year. The bankers got their start on investments made by merchants to support the extraction of commodities. This included the development of the West Indian trade with Boston and Baltimore, which required banks to advance capital for shipping ventures. According to Nettels[25] the primary function of the banks was to finance foreign and domestic trade with commodity crops, since most farms outside the plantation areas yielded only small surpluses. Woodman describes the way the banker and merchant worked together to take a greater cut of the surplus value produced by African labor:

> Cotton buyers brought still more paper into the market. As representatives of firms in the North or in Europe, buyers were given the right by the firm they represented to draw on them for funds in order to buy cotton. This would bring in bills drawn on New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Liverpool, London, and many other places which had to be sold for local currency that was then used to buy cotton. Resident cotton buyers carrying on business on their own accounts would draw a bill on themselves, sell it to the bank, and with the proceeds buy cotton. After shipping the newly purchased cotton to a merchant in the North or in Europe, the buyer would then draw on the Northern or foreign merchant and use this bill to meet his original obligation.[26]

The combined impact of the Northern merchants, brokers, and bankers on the South was immense, and the planters complained bitterly that they were not able to keep the entire surplus value of African labor for themselves. At a Southern convention of planters in 1847, they issued a public statement that included the following:

> The northern merchant has come hither and bought (produce) from the southern planter...abating from the price all the expenses, direct and incidental, of transportation. He has insured them in northern offices and shipped them abroad in his own vessels—exchanged them at a small profit for foreign merchandise—brought it home—paid one-fourth of its value to the government—added that amount and all the expenses of importation, and fifteen to twenty percent for his profits, to the price, and exposed it for sale. The southern merchant has now gone to him—lingering

the summer through with him at heavy expense—bought a portion of these goods—reshipped them in northern vessels to southern ports—added twenty-five percent more to the price, to cover his expenses and profits—and sold them to the southern planter. All the disbursements made in this process, save such as are made abroad, are made among northern men; all the profits, save the southern merchant's, are made by northern men; and the southern planter, who supplies nearly all the foreign goods of the country, gets his portion of them burdened with every expense that the government, merchant, insurer, seaman, warfinger, drayman, boatman, and wagoner can pile upon them...Every item in the endless catalogue of charges, except the government dues, may be considered a voluntary tribute from the citizens of the South to their brethren of the North; for they would have all gone to our people, had we done our own exporting and importing.[27]

We might add that the complaint of this idle class was not a cry for justice. The real cry for justice was made by the African laborers who were forced to make an involuntary tribute to the entire capitalist class and to the development of the entire U.S. North American society. This quote reveals however, the extent that Northern capitalists thrived off the trade in Southern commodities. The Northerners were able to use their monopolies in banking and concentrated capital to force the planter to turn over a large portion of his profits to them. According to Paul Trescott,[28] banking was based on income from commodity crops, and in fact banks were booming in good agricultural years and bust in bad years. In 1820 the U.S. had 300 banks, in 1840 it had 1000 and 1850 it had 2000. The Southern local banks had been hurt by local bank failures during the 1830's, and relied more and more on national banks and Northern banks. By 1860, Arkansas, Mississippi, Florida, and Texas had no banks at all. Indeed, the debt that the Southern planters owed the Northern bankers was growing every year. By 1860, this debt had reached 1/3 of a billion dollars and the secession of the South in 1861 led to 6,000 major financial failures in the North.

Another way that capitalism exacted its tribute based on the surplus values created by African labor was through taxes. Taxes on the sale of commodities were the main way that commercial taxes were collected by the state. This capital, in turn, was put in government bonds for the first national banks such as the Bank of the United States founded by Nicholas Biddle, which was based in the North but did most of its business in New Orleans and other Southern ports. Taxes made up the bulk of the government budgets of the South based on commodity trade, and in the federal budget they made up a smaller percent. Taxes and bonds were used to assemble capital for all public improvements, such as the paving of streets in New Orleans in 1822. This project was financed by a $300,000 loan from cotton broker Vincent Nolte which he paid, he says, in "solid, well-secured planter's notes" and on which he charged the city 98 percent interest over a ten year period. In other words, municipal improvements could only be made with the harnessing of the basic wealth of society, the commodities produced by African labor.[29]

Thus we have a situation in which the different sectors of the capitalist class who could bring together capital based on the labor of African people were investing this capital in enterprises designed to increase their extraction of this wealth. Merchants and insurance companies invested in the first corporations, and they were often aided by the state, which would act out of an awareness of the needs of the entire capitalist class for transportation and ever larger machinery to increase production. Likewise banks relied on state and merchant investment. How do we account for the rise of manufacture and industry?

From the beginning of the United States, commodity production for export was the basis of the economy and there was no industry to speak of. Cotton was by far the greatest export of the United States in the period of chattel slavery. Industrial goods only accounted for 6 percent of exports in 1820 and 11 percent in 1860. By the 1850's and 1860's, Africans held on plantations in the U.S. were producing 85 percent of the world's cotton, and 80 percent of the U.S. crop was exported. Cotton was key to international commerce and to the beginnings of industry in the U.S. Textile manufacturing was the "frontiering" edge of American industrialization,[30] the first factories to reach a size sufficient to permit them to transcend the limitations of local and regional markets and reach an entire national and international market.

In the 18th century, the U.S. government set up protectionist tariffs to support the production of textiles by power looms in New England which could undersell British imports. Bank deposits, based on profits from cotton trading, provided the greatest amount of money for the investment in industrial equipment. By the middle of the 19th century, U.S. commercial banks were shifting their investments from primarily funds for land improvement, slave purchase, and agricultural supplies, to industrial ventures. New England spindlage increased from 80,000 in 1811 to 1.3 million in the early 1830's. The number of spindles doubled again in the next 20 years. By the 1850's, a specialized machinery industry had grown up in New England dedicated to producing new equipment and designs for the textile factories. When the American protectionist legislation went into effect, the merchant capitalists of the North began to receive much greater incomes because they were spared the expenses of shipping their goods to England. The availability of this capital, accumulated surplus value from African labor, was the major stimulant to New England industry. By 1860, the cotton goods industries were the leading manufacturers in the United States, with 116,000 employees and a product valued at $107 million. Of this amount, about half, $54.7 million, was the value added by the factories, and the rest was the value produced by African labor. Again, such manufacture was concentrated in the North. New Orleans, the 5th largest U.S. city at the time, contained only 3 percent of the manufacturing, that is it was below the top 15 U.S. cities in manufacturing. New Orleans was simply a center for commodity extraction shipping.

It is important to note that the value of cotton goods sold as commodities reflect the value, i.e. labor, worked up in them during the entire process of production. But it is clear that the Northern capitalist had the upper hand in that he controlled vast amounts of accumulated capital. For this reason, he could cut into part of the surplus value produced by the African held as slave, even buying cotton for his factories at a lower price so that he would realize part of the profit upon the sale of his textiles from the direct labor of African people. How, then, can we add up the amount of wealth which the northern capitalists took from the direct labor of African people? Of the cotton crop sent to market, the factor took 2½ percent, the storage and insurance took 4 percent, the brokers took 10 percent, the banks at least 3



percent, and the textile manufacturers perhaps another 5 percent. Adding these up, we find that at least 24½ percent of the cotton values produced by African labor were taken by the Northern capitalists. This at least equals the 5 to 20 percent calculated as the amount of profit taken by Southern planters and probably far exceeds it . But to keep our estimate on the conservative side, we can conclude that the amount of profit derived from slave labor was equal for the Southern planter class and the Northern capitalists. For this reason, we must say that the $30 billion in profit for the planters is equalled by the $30 billion in profits for the Northern captalists, giving an estimate of wealth extracted from African people during the period of chattel slavery of $60 billion.

This is $60 billion which simply abstracts the measure of built-up human labor, human labor which could have been used to build up the strength and culture of Africa. Walter Rodney and others have demonstrated the disastrous effect of the slave trade in dislocating tens of millions of Africans and devastating economies throughout the Continent. The developing history and struggles of the people of Africa was interrupted by the coming of the Europeans, and the centuries-long process of bleeding Africa began. If the Europeans could not penetrate past the coast in 1490, and if African civilization far surpassed European civilization in 1490, the constant drain on Africa meant that by 1890 Africa was on its back, easy pickings for the European colonialists to enter and proclaim as their own. The labor, resources, technical knowledge, and culture of African people were carted off to enrich the European and North American ruling classes. This is why we say the underdevelopment of Africa was the condition for the development of Western society. While our history books taught us that Europe marched forward to build modern society while Africa was a land of backward barbarians, the true history reveals that the Europeans were the barbarians and the pirates. From the beginning, the division and dispersal of African people has been the technique that European and North American capitalists have used to amass huge fortunes from our labor. They dispersed our people around the world, but concentrated the wealth we produced in a few large financial centers. The struggle that African people have always carried out is to re-concentrate our people into one African people and to disperse the wealth out of the imperialist centers

by paying us back for the wealth we have produced and had ripped away from us.

How great a percent of the North American economy was actually tied up in the slave labor plantation system? Comparing the profit the capitalist class derived from slave labor with the entire Gross National Product (GNP) of a sample year, 1839, we see that approximately $540 million was profit from slave labor and the GNP was $1,540 million. This means that 35 percent of the Gross National Product was produced by African labor, while an untold amount of the GNP which is counted as the labor of North American workers was in fact for those engaged in transforming, shipping, and selling the products of that labor.

In order to determine how much reparations is owed to African people solely from the profit taken during the period of chattel slavery in the U.S., it is necessary to convert the $60 billion in profits in the previous centuries to the value it would have in 1982 dollars. This is done by comparing the costs of various necessities in different periods of history, which has generated the Consumer Price Index. The Consumer Price Index for 1967, then, gives an amount by which you can multiply any amount of money from any period of history to determine the value the money would have in 1967. Then new ratios are released every year to measure how much a dollar in 1967 would be worth today. Because of inflation under capitalism, then, the value of a dollar is always decreasing, and the number of dollars needed in 1982 to buy a pair of shoes is considerably more than in 1882. The rates of inflation are particularly high since World War II, and for simplicity we have started the calculation of dollar values during the period of chattel slavery in the middle of the 19th century instead of trying to calculate the dollar value conversion for each year. Roughly calculating, then, we find that a dollar in the 19th century would be worth 10 dollars today. So the $60 billion in stolen wealth during slavery must be valued as $600 billion today. That is the amount of crystallized labor, profits, that the capitalists took during the period of slavery. This does not even include interest which could also be charged on a debt so long overdue. So at a minimum, $600 billion is owed to African people for reparations for the period of slavery.

Can there be any doubt of the central place that African stolen labor played in the explosive growth of American and European capitalism? A contemporary economist, E.N. Elliot of Augusta, Georgia, wrote in 1860:

> Slavery is not an isolated system but is so mingled with the business of the world that it derives facilities from the most innocent transaction. Capital and labor in Europe and America are largely employed in the manufacture of cotton. These goods, to a great extent, may be seen freighting every vessel from Christian nations that traverses the seas of the globe and filling the warehouses and shelves of the merchants over two-thirds of the world. By the industry, skill, and enterprise employed in the manufacture of cotton, mankind are better clothed; their comfort better promoted, general interest more highly stimulated, commerce more widely extended, and civilization more rapidly advanced than in any preceding age.[31]

Thus bragged the North American colonial apologist. A more accurate description of the relation of the slave trade and plantation labor to the growing world economy is provided by George Rawick:

> For the Europeans and the Americans, the slave trade provided a significant part of the basis for the original accumulation of the early stages of capitalist development and thus helped lay the foundation for nineteenth and twentieth century capitalism. In Africa, on the other hand, slavery actually helped prevent the accumulation of capital.
>
> Capitalism in Western Europe required that the peasants be thrown off the land by such processes as the English enclosure acts, which turned farms into sheep runs. It required that the surplus population be deported or enticed to the New World and such other outposts of European colonization as Australia. Thousands of the poor, the landless, and the criminal were shipped to North America or Australia as indentured servants or convicts.
>
> Capitalism, moreover, required the capital extracted from slave labor on the plantations and in the mines of the New World. It demanded that the stock of capital gained in the slave trade and through the labor in mines and on plantations be taken back into the

mother country and that, at a later stage, the surplus labor force be kept at home, cheapening the cost of labor.[32]

And, as the African People's Socialist Party explains in *The Struggle for Bread, Peace, and Black Power*:

> The slave trade was the prime force which gave birth to the world economy and to the development of capitalism which in its present form we call imperialism. Consequently, it is the responsibility of all genuine socialist revolutionaries to have a deep, fundamental, historical analysis of the consequences of the slave trade, not only as it regards Africa but also as it regards the various and sundry struggles against capitalism throughout the world, for they are all confronted with contradictions which have their origins in the attack on Africa, slavery, and the slave trade.[33]

For too long, the colonialist academics have clouded people's minds with the metaphysical and unscientific analyses known as "race politics." Race politics ascribes the contradictions in the world to difference in races, either through their cultural, biological, or psychological characteristics. Divorced from an understanding of the material underpinnings of society, race politics are shared by some African nationalists and such liberal North Americans as the Kennedy clan. Some of the people who accept these politics will explain that the Europeans assaulted Africa because of a basic biological flaw in their evolution; others will blame the Africans for having chiefs willing to sell their people into captivity, while all will agree that African slavery was caused by something other than the development of the capitalist system. We have demonstrated here that the kidnapping and placing to work of African people was central to the growth and development of the wealth of U.S. society. The surplus values obtained from the forced labor of African people made up for 20 to 50 percent of the entire Gross National Product of the U.S. Not only that, but it amounted to freed up capital, capital that could be concentrated in the beginning industries which were destined to start a chain of development and exploitation unheard of in human history.

More crucial than the figure of $600 billion in debts owed from the period of chattel slavery, however, is the understanding that Western capitalism would not have even



gotten off the ground without this stolen wealth. Indeed, if Africa had been allowed to develop throughout the last four centuries, without the constant drain caused by the brutal depopulation of the slave traders on the coasts whose agents reached across the entire Continent in search of bodies to sell, without the $60 billion in wealth produced off of African labor which went to enrich Boston and New York and London merchants and capitalists, without the tens of millions of premature and grisly deaths at the hands of the slave traders, there can be no doubt that we would not be today inheriting the deep political contradictions of African oppression and underdevelopment that are seen from Azania to Oakland, California. The fundamental Marxist law of the accumulation of capital does not mean simply that the lot of workers got worse as capitalism developed. It cannot even be explained by the more international perspective that the growth of colonialism and the international division of labor meant that the emiseration of the working class was "exported" to the colonies. Rather, the degradation and emiseration of labor was from the very first instance based on the development of a world economy, the colonization of African people first by kidnapping to the New World and then, additionally, on the Continent of Africa itself, and on the concentration of the stolen wealth of these colonial hostages into the first large scale capital enterprises. But the emiseration of labor for profit cannot be limited to narrowly-defined economics. It means the theft of resources; history, liberty, life, culture, traditions, family relations, and much more. No matter what further calculations and quantifications can be made, it is clear that the African captivity during the rise of capitalism constitues the very foundation of the product of capitalism, and that this is owed to African people.

## Afterword to Chapter 2: Black Inventions

American economic history is fraught with myths and distortions and capitalist assumptions about the causes and bases of the explosive growth of capitalism in the U.S. One of the major points reviewed in Western economic history is the series of inventions and technical improvements which gave continual bursts to the productivity of labor in the U.S. and therefore to the ability of the capitalists to accumulate capital. This colonialist myth must be exposed.

In the first place, group agricultural techniques were highly developed in Africa, and the familiarity of the Ashanti and other African captives with this type of agriculture made them an essential labor force. Continual improvements in agricultural techniques were, as has always been the case, developed by the laborers themselves in order to make their work easier, although these developments were inevitably taken over by the planter class in order to work the Africans harder and extract more profit. Besides all the agricultural techniques developed in cotton and tobacco farming, Africans were responsible for such inventions as: the corn planter, cotton planter, and corn harvesters, invented by Henry Blair in the 1840's; the advanced methods of refining sugar and sugar beets, developed by Norbert Rillieux; the lubricating process required for all machinery, invented by Elijah McCoy; railroad air brakes, invented by Granville Woods; and many more.

In addition, even those inventions attributed to European and North American technologists must be placed in the context of the prevailing slave economy. For the concentration of resources which was providing capital for the first factories was also necessary in order to free up people to build universities, to study in the schools, to establish the techniques of modern science. The inventors and scientists who provided the developments for the industrial revolution would have been occupied as peasants or artisans, working the majority of each day just to provide themselves with subsistence, if it had not been for the wealth extracted from Africans held as slaves.

Certainly universities and learning had existed in earlier centuries, such as the world-famous university in Timbuktu, the unsurpassed library of the ancient world at Alexandria, and the smaller schools in Oxford and Paris. But the concentration of capital that was attendant upon the rise of the slave trade led to surpluses that provided an unprecedented growth of the universities, of general literacy among the middle classes of Europe, of printing presses and extensive experimental projects designed to improve production growing up throughout Europe and the U.S.

This is not just a general point. It can be demonstrated by such dramatic examples as the invention of the steam engine, which set the basis for the first factory system and extensive machinery manufacture. The man who is credited with this invention, James Watt, lived off the proceeds from just one plantation in Jamaica. It was the labor of African people on this plantation which provided the surplus for Watt to carry out his experiments, to put his first attempted engines into production. In addition, Eli Whitney, who is generally credited with the invention of the cotton gin in 1793 which revolutionized the cotton plantation economy by increasing the amount of baleable cotton per laborer by ten times, was the son of a planter. Whitney learned the science and mechanics he needed at Yale University, one of those Ivy League institutions established for the training of religious and scientific cadre for the Southern ruling class in the United States.

Thus it can be seen that many of the techniques and even much of the humanistic social sciences of the West were taken from African culture, which was not just sharing useful information but being robbed of African identity, culture, and technique in order to enrich the life of the captors. And even those techniques and cultural advances of Europe and North America during the 17th and 18th centuries which did not have direct links to Africa were based on the structure of the economy, which was based on stolen wealth from African people.

The United States government has established extensive precedent in law for the right of inventors of products who have been deprived of royalties from these inventions to sue for relief. For instance, Peter Roberts invented the "quick release" wrench in 1965 as an employee of Sears, which proceeded to sell 37 million of them and realized $172 million in profit. The inventor sued because Sears had simply paid him a bonus for his inventions but no royalties. He asked for $19 million and received a judgement for $5 million which Sears had to pay him in 1982. This and many other precedents may be advanced by Africans seeking reparations for stolen productivity and technological innovations.

## Chapter Three

# The Rise of Colonialism: The African Domestic Colony, 1865 to 1945

After the Civil War and the end of chattel slavery, the form of exploitation of African people was transformed in certain fundamental ways. However, the basic relationship between African people and North American society remained constant. This chapter exposes those similarities and those differences in the course of determining the amount of reparations owed to African people for colonial theft from 1865 to 1945.

While a particular type of slavery was overthrown by African people during the Civil War, the exploitation of black labor in the U.S. was continuous after the war. Slavery had been propping up capitalism for 300 years. It did not just happen for a brief period and then go away, leaving a domestic white capitalist economy. Moreover, the exploitation of African people continued after official slavery was abolished, and in fact more efficient means of extraction of profits were devised. The wealth which the U.S. had amassed during the period of slavery was used to subdue more and more of the world, putting peoples to work right in their own homelands for the service of the U.S. ruling class.

While the capital intensive sector of the economy, where huge machinery and technical innovations were applied to production, was reserved for the North American proletariat, the white working class, the real origin of the growing profits of capitalism was the ever-larger populations of peoples colonized by capitalism and forced to work at ever lower pay. This was the labor intensive sector of the world economy, whose labor was stolen at the expense of the dissolution and underdevelopment of their economies.

The working class of the industrial centers never managed to grasp the importance of the world economy and failed to see beyond their own interest in improving their immediate conditions or power. The left leaders, even the German

Marxists who settled in the U.S., were not won to strong solidarity with the slave resistance, but only gave support to the extent that they could see some advantage to be gained from such support. Marx devised the term "wage slave" to dramatize the plight of the industrial proletariat under capitalism. But while the proletarian may be a wage slave, that is, held in a sort of slavery by the wages system, he/she existed side by side with real slavery, slaves in every sense of the word. If Marx was warning of the danger of European workers being reduced to the status of slaves, he was not placing a central emphasis on the actual slavery that existed.

With the capitalists in the North raking in huge profits from the slave system, and the white working class providing outright hostility or at best some signs of weak support to the African freedom fight, how did the slave system come to an end? The capitalists did not just decide one day to free the slaves and try out another form of exploitation. That is not how history unfolds.

## THE END OF CHATTEL SLAVERY

Chattel slavery came to an end in the United States not because of the conflict between a Northern capitalist and a Southern feudalist class, not because of the moral crusade of white abolitionists, but in the first place because of the very resistance of African people. Not only were there extensive slave rebellions such as Nat Turner's in Virginia, but the South was witnessing successful slave revolutions in the Caribbean and growing lines of communication and subversion between Africans on the islands and the Africans on the U.S. plantations. For a fictionalized account of this very real relation, see the 1850's novel by Martin Delaney, *Blake*. The planters were desperate to provide for their own security, which was one of the main motivations of the Louisiana Purchase. The planters hoped to extend the state power of slave-holders further west in order to close off any nearby frontier for escape and resistance by the slaves. They sought to disperse the African labor force in order to undermine the density of the African population and its significance for rebellion, and to weaken the lines of communication and rebellion.

In addition, Africans were escaping from the plantations in greater numbers every year, aided by Africans in the North or fleeing all the way to Canada. The planters absolutely required a closed border policy with the Northern states helping to enforce bondage laws, and the continual escapes and defiance of Africans kept up pressure for non-compliance with the slave-holders. The struggles in the Supreme Court, such as the Dred Scott decision which declared that Africans who escaped North were still the rightful property of their former owners, and the struggle for control of the Senate which led to bitter disputes as each new state was admitted to the Union, were all centered around the question of assuring the planter's security against escapes and rebellions.

In this situation, some Northern capitalists perceived that they could reach a new plateau of power if they allowed the African resistance to overturn the planter class and then replaced the increasingly restive Southern planters with their own direct agents for the exploitation of African workers. The Civil War did not really begin in 1861, since it had been raging in Kansas for 10 years with the heroic resistance of African people and their supporters staging pitched battles with the expansionist planter powers. The truth of this history will take much more space to draw out, but suffice it to say that we must insist that the initiative, the motive force in the challenge to the slave system came from African people ourselves, with various Northern

classes lining up as temporary allies, rather than the other way around as it is usually described.

When the Civil War did break out, it was the general strike of the Southern labor force, African workers, as well as the decisive participation of Africans in Union military units and in local militias, which led to the defeat of the slave-owner's government. For the most thorough documentation of this process, see "The General Strike" in *Black Reconstruction in America* by W.E.B. DuBois.[1] The revolutionary struggle of African people in the 1860's showed that we were able to destroy the functioning of the capitalist economy at the point that it immediately impacted on us, the slave labor plantations. But the real basis by this time for capitalist State power was concentrated in the industrial North, and African people were far removed in consciousness and location from being prepared to strike at this ultimate form of the oppressor. Only now, with the proletarianization of the African colony, with our concentration in the cities of the urban industrial areas of the U.S. does our anti-colonial struggle lead us to a direct confrontation with capitalist power and pave the way for socialism.

The Northern capitalists, who had amassed the product of African labor in the great cities of the U.S., betrayed the black freedmen who were building up institutions of black power, education, farming, and government in the South immediately following the Civil War. By 1876, the capitalists' Republican Party struck a deal with the planter-oriented Democratic Party to adapt a new system of exploitation of African labor, to move from a system where capitalism extracts its wealth in the form of African slave labor to the system of extraction based on peasant labor. As before, this transformation was made to serve the dominant mode of production, the capitalist mode of production, but it evolved its own version of cruel exploitation for those held in the periphery of the system, the profit-producing primary growers. W.E.B. DuBois describes the impact of this deal:

> The bargain of 1876 was essentially an understanding by which the Federal government ceased to sustain the right to vote of half of the laboring population of the South (i.e. black workers) and left capital as represented by the old planter class, the new Northern capitalist, and the capitalist that began to rise out of the poor whites, with a control of labor greater than in any modern industrial state in civilized lands. Out of that there has arisen in the South an exploitation of labor unparalleled in modern times...There began to rise in America in 1876 a new capitalism and a new enslavement of labor. Home labor in cultured lands, appeased and misled by a ballot whose power the dictatorship of vast capital strictly curtailed, was bribed by high wage and political office to unite in an exploitation of white, yellow, brown, and black labor in lesser lands and "breeds without the law"...Sons of ditch diggers aspired to be spawn of bastard kings and thieving aristocrats rather than of rough-handed children of dirt and toil. The immense profit from this new exploitation and world-wide commerce enabled a guild of millionaires to engage the greatest engineers, the wisest men of science, as well as pay high wage to the more intelligent labor and at the same time to have enough surplus to make more thorough the dictatorship of capital over the state and over the popular vote, not only in Europe and America but in Asia and Africa.[2]

The way that post-Civil War Black Power institutions were overthrown will be familiar to those who have watched the military defeat of the African anti-colonial struggle in the U.S. during the early 70's and the successive techniques used to reverse the gains won by the massive social struggle of black people. The dominant sector of the U.S. white ruling class which had followed the armed might of black soldiers and the power of the general strike to defeat their sectional rivals, the planter class, withdrew material support for the black militia and social reforms after the Civil War and unleashed the armed white terror gangs of the Ku Klux Klan. They could do this because African people in the U.S. had not been able to attack and destroy the basis of our oppression, the very system of capitalism and the U.S. State which protected it. Instead, African people took the bourgeois state power apparatus, such as the legislatures of South Carolina and Georgia, and attempted to use them in the interest of material security, bread, peace, and Black Power for the African population and for all peoples. But as Lenin was to point out 50 years later in reviewing the failures of democratic revolutions, it is not possible for the working class to simply take over the bourgeois state apparatus and use it in their own interest. Black Power in the

1860's, as in the 1960's, shook the very foundation of the U.S. system but fell short of seizing state power, destroying the apparatus of bourgeois oppression, and establishing true people's power.

*Destruction of a Freedom school in Memphis 1866*

The white ruling class of the United States moved to smash Black Power and re-enslave Africans in a new and more sophisticated form of oppression. To justify this, they used the familiar charges of corruption and embezzlement of public funds against the African-run Southern legislatures. In an attempt to counter the chorus of slander and lies which the Northern capitalists were heaping on the short-lived structures of Black Power, South Carolina Freedman's Bureau officer and well-known "father of Black Nationalism," Martin Delaney, proposed in 1869 the establishment of a Black Historical Society, saying:

> We wish to put on record in an enduring form the truths regarding our struggle for freedom and thus preserve untarnished our glorious position and our heroic deeds. If we let the Yankees manufacture a history as they do wooden nutmegs, we shall have of the former about as good an article as they give us of the latter, and as much like the genuine.[3]

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF COLONIALISM

What was the form of exploitation of African people in the U.S. after Black Power was overthrown? After the Civil War, most Africans in the U.S. (over 90 percent) were still in the South, numbering over 4 million. This condition prevailed until the eve of World War II, when 3/4 of black people in the U.S. were still in the South. The key to the southern economy was still agriculture, tended by African labor, with only 6.7 percent of black people residing in Southern cities. The Federal Government Survey of 1865 showed, however, that 80 percent of the skilled labor in the South was carried out by African people, a condition which had prevailed because Africans held as slaves provided the greatest profit margin before the Civil War.

A mark of the economic transformation after the Civil War, when official slavery was abolished, was what 19th century bourgeois economist J.M. Cairnes called the "dual labor market." The dual labor market, or non-competing labor groups, has been documented and studied by economists right up to today, even though its importance as an essential part of the proof of domestic colonialism has been ignored. This meant that the labor of African people was reserved for particular tasks, the lowest paid, most dangerous, most labor-intensive tasks of the economy. The enforcement of the dual labor market was carried out by white terror designed to punish black people who were "uppity" about demanding to be hired for skilled tasks, who presumed to take any part in the running of our own society. This was given official support by the disenfranchisement of black voters in the 1880's and 90's, a condition which existed openly until the Civil Rights Movement and which still persists today.

After the defeat of Black Power by 1876, most African people were forced to work as share-croppers in Southern agriculture, though the dual labor market also assigned certain other tasks well-known as "nigger work": house cleaning and toilet cleaning, hotel and restaurant servants, fertilizer plants, cigar and tobacco plants, slaughterhouses and packing, lumber jobs, turpentine works, road and bridge work, track laying, water transportation, laundry, dye works, military ordinance handlers.

During the first half century of colonialism, before black resistance and international scrutiny forced the colonizers to adopt more subtle forms, the dual labor market was quite officially inscribed in social and work laws. In Charleston, South Carolina, for example, the building tradesmen were divided into a white and a black local, both affiliated with

the same national union, with the pay scale for the Africans set lower than that for the whites. Certainly African access to different job categories shifted over the years, depending on the needs of capital. When the economy was booming and North American workers could occupy the higher rungs of the economy, more and more semi-skilled and even skilled job categories opened up for Africans. When it contracted, black workers were driven off the job. The 80 percent of Southern skilled trades being held by blacks in 1865 fell to 5 percent by 1890. During the depression of the 1930's, black firemen working on the railroad line in the lower Mississippi Valley were driven off their jobs by the white Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen which unleashed a campaign of terror in which 10 black workers were killed, 11 more wounded or shot at, and seven others flogged. In 1940, the white unions in Tampa, Florida, maneuvered to move 500 African workers out of the shipbuilding yards.[4]

The fact that job categories shifted does not deny the dual labor market but underlines its consistency, its adaptability to the needs of capital, and the particular relationship black workers have had to the U.S. economy. Because black and white workers are not competing for the same jobs, black unemployment does not drive down white wages (with black workers waiting to take the white job) but primarily serves to drive down black wages, just as we see in other colonies. And in the overall capitalist boom caused by colonialism, the material conditions of white workers are enhanced by the operation of this dual labor market.

The implications of the dual labor market are profound. They demand that revolutionary or progressive political organizations in the U.S. call for the right of African workers to independence and freedom from colonial conditions, and for North American (white) workers to recognize that the only road to socialism is by supporting the struggle of African people. The white left, however, attempts to pull African workers under their leadership and pretends that North Americans can be won to an integrationist stand by an appeal to their self-interest, claiming that their wages are driven down by discrimination and that they can expect wages to shoot up with the achievement of integration. Of course, any white worker knows better than this and will not be talked down to by the leftists who seek to describe reality out of their books instead of based on what is readily apparent. White workers know they get a better deal by being



in the heart of imperialism, and narrow appeals to self-interest only result in trade unionism and increasing national chauvinism among white workers. These workers can be won to supporting African liberation by pointing to the real costs of imperialism: violence, alienation, and the prospect of being killed defending the capitalist world system. The fact of the dual labor market is central to the U.S. economy and has been demonstrated over and over, but the leftists of the North American society especially seek to cover it over and hide its significance.

The colonial condition of African people in the U.S. required extensive planning and control systems from the U.S. State. The main system of control was the North American people themselves, who had been conditioned by centuries of practice to act as slave catchers and to participate in the feast at the table of black bondage. North American internationalism, North American solidarity, whatever small glimmer it offers, has been a profound break from the mad history of the majority of North Americans and holds the only promise for a positive role being played by North American workers. Enforced through the terrorism of the Klan, the State and local police, and federal agents, the domestic colonial system was institutionalized through education. In the latter part of the 19th century, conferences were held between white ruling class representatives of the North and South at such meetings as Capon Springs, the trips of Robert Ogden to Hampton and Tuskegee, and the organizing of the Southern Education Board and the founding of the General Education Board. The philosophy for Southern education that was decided upon was that higher education should be discouraged for the "child race," and instead black workers must be trained to be humble, patient, and hardworking laborers whose ultimate destiny would be determined by their white employers. Summing up the philosophy thus decreed by U.S. educators, W.E.B. DuBois describes it as follows:

> White and Negro labor must, so far as possible, be taken out of active competition, by segregation in work: to the whites the bulk of well-paid skilled labor and management; to the Negro, farm labor, unskilled labor in industry and domestic service. Exceptions to this general pattern would occur especially in some sorts of skills like building and repairs; but in general the "white" and "Negro" job would be kept separate

and superimposed.[5]

This is the dual labor market. It meant that African people in the United States comprised another country, the producers of cash crops essential to industry, the labor intensive peasant economy held within U.S. borders reflecting the very same colonial process in the cotton fields of Georgia as in the cotton fields of Nigeria, India, or Guatemala. And as with all colonialism, the bleeding of African people for the enrichment of the center also meant the underdevelopment of the colonial subjects. African culture, African economic initiative, African survival itself was under constant assault. What was this peasant agriculture like and how did it come about?

## TENANT FARMING

The South suffered an economic depression after the Civil War as a result of the dislocation and destruction of the war. The material infrastructure, mules, transportation, and tools were not irreparably damaged. The African labor however, declined by 28 to 37 percent as a result of Africans refusing to take up work at age 9 and labor until death and as a result of African rural workers moving around to find better employment and in the guerrilla warfare which persisted after 1865. While non-producing parasite classes in the South continued to be non-producers, they were suffering loss of power and prerogatives. While the per capita income in 1859 was $89 in the South (primarily produced by Africans held as slaves), it dropped to $48 in 1869 and slowly rose to $57 in 1899.[6] The war that raged in the South after the Civil War was between Africans seeking to keep a greater percent of the wealth they created and the North American capitalists who used military force to keep Africans disempowered.

With the military defeat of Black Power in the South, black workers were driven off their communally held lands or small holdings which they had established after the war. The U.S. government represented the State power of the capitalist class. This government is established with the pretense of being above class allegiance, acting as the arbiter between various classes through the courts and legislature. In fact, however, the laws are there to protect the rule of private property holders, and ultimately, the power of the State, based on the army and police, will be called in to enforce the supremacy of the bourgeoisie.



African people, being colonized, have a different relation to the State than North American workers. For in the United States, the armed force of the bourgeoisie will be augmented whenever necessary by the arming of white workers, who are deputized throughout the South whenever the bourgeoisie perceives the need to attack African people, and who are being organized into vast informant networks under the guise of anti-crime neighborhood organizations.

*African man plowing by hand.*

After 1876, Africans in the South were obliged to work the land on the conditions set forth by those who held title and with the backing of the courts and military forces. Old planters or new North American landowners were given the plantations back and Africans were only allowed to work small plots of land as "share-croppers," people who did not own title to the land but farmed a piece of the white man's land in return for paying him a portion, usually 1/3 to 1/2, of the crop.

Share-cropping has also been called "dept peonage" since it is a method of holding the agricultural laborer on the land with the bare minimum of produce kept by the laborer for his/her own survival. This is a system of adapting

feudal relations to the capitalist mode of production. The effect was the same. It created a particular type of labor for African people in the South which was the most labor-intensive, provided the most opportunities for extraction of profit, and allowed the white population to prosper at the expense of African labor. As proof of the labor intensity, note that the value of implements and machinery on U.S. farms was $525 per farm in 1930, while it was only $68 for black people's farms and $57 for black tenants. In that year, there were 10.4 white farmers for each truck in the white countryside, while there were 79.7 black farmers per truck in the black rural areas.[7]

A leading African nationalist of the time, Henry Turner, describes through an interview with a black freedman the struggles over the control of the commodity producing land in Georgia in 1872:

> Q: You say that colored men employed in that county have not been able to get anything for their labor. Why is that?
>
> A: During the year there is very little money paid to them, and if they want to obtain provisions or clothing they are given an order on some store. At the end of the year these little bills are collected and however small a quantity of things have been taken, almost always the colored man is brought into debt. That is alleged as a reason why they should be bound to stay with their employers and work out what they say they owe them.
>
> Q: A sort of practical peonage?
>
> A: Yes, sir. Whenever there is fear that the laborer will go to work with someone else the following year, he is apt to come out $25 to $30 in debt and his employer calls upon him to work it out.
>
> There was a bill introduced the other day to make it a penal offense for a laborer to break his contract. He reads the contract to the black man and, of course, reads just what he pleases. When the black man takes it to somebody else and gets him to read it, it reads quite differently. Among other things, there is a provision in the contract that he must not go to any political gathering or meeting. If he does, he will lose $5 for every day that he is absent, and yet he is to receive only $50 or $75 a year. Every day that he is sick, a dollar or a dollar and a half is to be deducted. The man may want to quit and work for some person else who will pay him better wages.
>
> Q: The effect of the legislation would be to render the laborer practically a slave during the period of his contract?
>
> A: Or else he would be liable to punishment by imprisonment.[8]

Such practices were inscribed in the laws. After the Civil War, the ruling class moved immediately to secure the control of African labor, the key to their wealth. Such laws as the Black Codes of Mississippi passed in 1865 were at various times modified or changed, but the many ways the law works to protect the power of property continues to this day, in the contracts and leases and mortgages that Africans are forced to sign in order to eat, work, and have a place to sleep. The Black Codes state in part:

> Section 6...All contracts for labor made with freedmen, free negroes, and mulattoes for a longer period than one month shall be in writing, and in duplicate, attested and read to said freedman, free negro, or mulatto by a beat, city, or county officer, or

two disinterested white persons of the county in which the labor is to be performed, of which each party shall have one and said contracts shall be taken and held as entire contracts, and if the laborer shall quit the service of the employer before the expiration of his terms of service, without good cause, he shall forfeit his wages for that year up to the time of quitting.

Section 7...Every civil officer shall, and every person may, arrest and carry back to his or her legal employer any freedman, free negro, or mulatto who shall have quit the service of his or her employer before the expiration of his or her term of service without good cause and said officer and person shall be entitled to receive for arresting and carrying back every deserting employee aforesaid the sum of five dollars, and ten cents per mile from the place of arrest to the place of delivery; and the same shall be paid by the employer, and held as a set-off for so much against the wages of said deserting employee...[9]

Thus were all North Americans recognized by law as deputized to enforce the slave labor system under a new guise, and to help in the repression of African labor. The Mississippi Apprentice Law, which was also copied by other Southern states, essentially made all African youth liable to seizure and forced labor at the hands of the State, another violation of specific provisions of the Genocide Convention which prohibits taking children of a group. The law states in part:

Section 1...It shall be the duty of all sheriffs, justices of the peace, and other civil officers of the several counties in this State, to report to the probate courts of their respective counties semi-annually, at the January and July terms of said courts, all freedmen, free negroes, and mulattoes, under the age of eighteen, in their respective counties, beats, or districts, who are orphans or whose parent or parents have not the means or who refuse to provide for and support said minors; and thereupon it shall be the duty of said probate court to order the clerk of said court to apprentice said minors to some competent and suitable person, on such terms as the court may direct, having a particular care to the interest of said minor: Provided, that the former owner of said minors shall



have the preference when, in the opinion of the court, he or she shall be a suitable person for that purpose.[10]

In 1930, in the Southern share-crop economy, Africans were in a condition of peasantry which had extended since the Civil War and were required to maintain their own tools while having to turn over a percent of their crop to the landowner. In these key agricultural regions during the years 1865 to 1945, more than half was planted in cotton.[11] On this land, only 13 percent of African farmers were land-owners as compared to 63 percent of white farmers in the South. The average acreage of black farms was 44.8 in 1920 which declined to 42.5 in 1930. For white farms in 1920, it was 165.7 acres and rose to 176 acres in 1930.[12]

Shocking as these differences are, however, it is worse. Most African farmers were tenant farmers and worked plots from 15 to 40 acres, with the average being 37 acres. Cash tenants made up 7 percent of African farmers (those who worked a white man's land and paid him a cash rental rate). Share tenants and share croppers made up 43 percent and wage laborers (migrant workers) made up 37 percent. Those who paid rent in kind usually had to turn over 1/3 to 1/2 of their crop.

## THE COUNTRY STORE

Did the share-crop economy afford a means for the capitalists to wring even more wealth out of the labor of African people than slavery? The answer is yes. The slave economy had been adapted to the efficient production of commodity crops by the most cruel driving of African labor. The African-dominated South, however, did not provide a market for capitalist products and in fact was maintained by the planters as essentially self-sufficient. The system of share-cropping, however, was an advance over the slave system because it allowed the capitalists to exploit African labor both as producers and as a market. For this reason the actual rate of profit, and amount of wealth extracted from African labor, *increased* and African laborers continued to be paid below the amount they needed to survive. Now, instead of the burden of buying seed, implements, and other supplies falling on the planter, it fell on the individual black worker and at exorbitant rates.

The small merchants who ran the general store represented either individual enterpreneurs or, quite often,

the local land-owner himself. These merchants had a territorial monopoly on the African's purchasing power, i.e. they were the only store around and the African worker lacked transportation to shop around, as well as suffering threats if he tried to make purchases outside of the local area. A traveller in 1875 decribes the country store:

> The planter keeps on the place a store at which renters may buy their supplies and where they get a moderate credit. He also keeps a cotton-gin and a grist-mill for the use of which he makes a charge; and he takes care to get his year's rent out of the first of the crop. In practice, furthermore, the planter finds it necessary to ride daily through the fields to see that the renters are at work and to aid them with his advice. During the winter, he hires them to chop wood for his own use and to split rails and keep up the fences.[13]

We need not speculate on the kind of "advice" the landowner offered to the African workers. Suffice it to say that these observations reveal how the control of tools, of machinery, of land-rights, and of supplies was the method the ruling class used for the re-enslavement of African labor.

The September 1980 issue of *The Burning Spear*, the political organ of the African People's Socialist Party, clearly demonstrates that the relationship of the landowner to black workers has not changed absolutely, even today. This issue of *The Burning Spear* described conditions in a black community in Gainesville, Florida where the Party was doing organizing work:

> GAINESVILLE, Fla.—Porter's Quarters is what it's called. It's one of the most impoverished and exploited black communities in Gainesville. It is also one of the oldest black communities in Gainesville. Most of the black people who live in Porter's Quarters live in little wooden box-like shacks which are painted white and green this year. The houses are old, some have been gutted by fire, painted over and rented out again. Some do not have doors on the hinges and the doors must be propped up from the inside by tenants.
>
> The wooden shacks in Porter's Quarters are owned by Gene Robinson, a white man who also owns Gene's Grocery Store in Porters. On the end of the month the black residents take their welfare checks and food stamps to Gene's where he takes out money for their rent and for what he says they owe him for food they've bought during the month. Some people get very little back from their welfare checks after Gene has finished with them; some get nothing at all. [14]

The prices fixed at the stores were astronomically high especially through the credit system which was employed when African farmers could not supply the seeds, fertilizer, and food needed to get through to harvest time. Ransom and Sutch[15] estimate that the amount of interest on credit charged by the local merchant was 60 percent per year. While credit and interest has only recently been put forth as a middle-class privilege with the system of credit cards, it has for centuries been reserved for the colonized people in order to further the exploitation and theft of value. By combining the labor of African people for production with the exploitation of African people as a captive colonial market, did the capitalists actually increase their rate of profit? Let business historian Harold Woodman describe a typical situation:

> As both landlord and furnishing merchant, the postwar planter was in a position to reap huge profits. A Mississippi planter boasted that when he rented his land to former slaves he was able to receive an annual income from his land "amounting to nearly its full value." In addition, he furnished renters supplies from his store, receiving a lien on their crops. "Now, my little piece here ain't more than a couple of hundred acres," he concluded, "but it's paying me more than double what it did when I 'worked' fifty 'niggers' on it."[16]

Through these means, African workers continued to create raw materials (cotton) and finished products (railroads, meat, turpentine, etc.) while being forced to labor at bare subsistence levels. The values of these products represent wealth created by African labor, with only a small percent held back for survival and reproduction. Indeed, African workers were not paid even the value of their labor power. That is, we were not paid enough to survive and reproduce. Just as during slavery, we were forced to maintain small vegetable patches which were tended at night and by children in order to stave off starvation. This is a central part of the operation of colonialist economics.

Did all of these extra profits just get sunk into little

country stores or isolated in the hands of the petty local landlords? Not at all, for the power of capital was concentrating the profits in the huge city banks and plowing them into ever larger factories and machinery. The capitalists purchased Southern cotton at depressed prices and sold it at inflated prices, thus extracting part of the surplus value for themselves. Secondly, they were the real power behind the credit system of the Southern stores. Testifying before the U.S. Industrial Commission in 1899, planter and furnishing merchant P.H. Lovejoy reveals this fact:

Q: How do they (Southern farmers) get supplies?
A: Through merchants.
Q: And the merchants?
A: Through the Banks.
Q: And where do the local banks get their money?
A: New York.[17]

And thirdly, the cotton that was not shipped to the massive mills of the North was processed in mills owned by Northern capitalists while Southern utilities and other works were tied into the giant North American corporations:

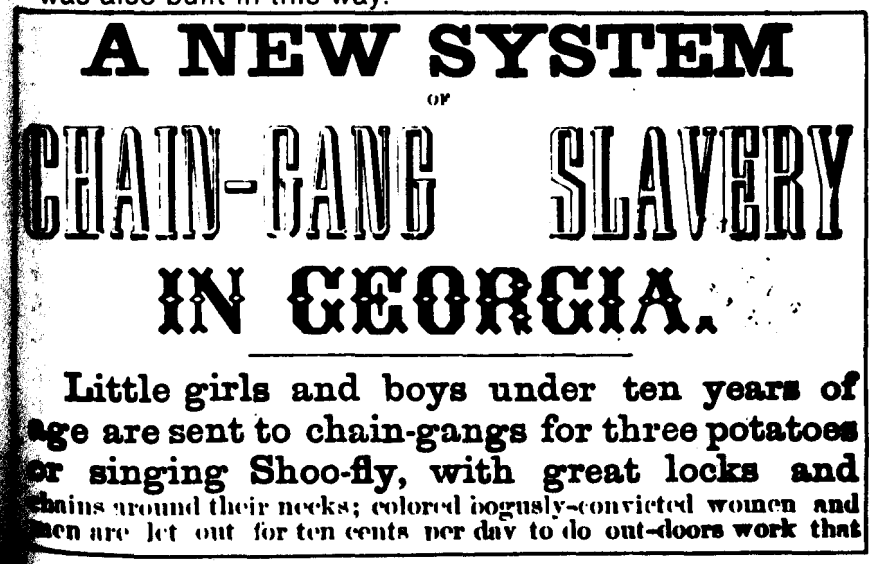
> Many of the largest mills are owned outside of the region. Other mills are only recent emigrants from Northern locations to the South...The public utilities in the South are almost completely controlled by outside interests. All the major railroad systems are owned and controlled elsewhere. Most of the great electric holding company system, whose operating companies furnish the light, heat, and power for Southern homes and industries, are directed, managed, and owned by outside interests. Likewise, the transmission and distribution of natural gas, one of the South's greatest assets, is almost completely in the hands of remote financial institutions. The richest deposits of the iron ore, coal, and limestone that form the basis for the steel industry in Birmingham are owned or controlled outside of the region.[18]

When this report refers to ownership outside of the South, it clearly refers to the fact that the North American capitalist class, concentrated in Northern cities, controls the economy of the African dominated South. The colonial conditions of Africans in the U.S. are reinforced by this constant extraction which leads to economic dependency and underdevelopment.



## PRISONS

African share-croppers and rural wage laborers were subject to economic disaster when prices fluctuated or land was exhausted. Africans who attempted to leave the land they were on to find new sites of employment, however, would lose their jobs and be black-balled by the land owners. In 1880, the land owners implemented a Wage Contract for hired black hands which laid out the type, amount, and quality of work which must be performed; established a fine of 50 cents per day for absence from farm work; and ordered that workers could not leave the plantation without a pass.[19] Africans who were caught off the plantations while looking for work were arrested as vagrants. If their former employer chose, he could pay the fine and require the African worker to pay off the debt through labor. Those not ransomed in this way were put to work on gang labor teams which again extracted their labor at a maximum rate providing only bare subsistence. In the South from 1880 to 1940, many turpentine plants, mines, rice plantations, and road and levee works used prison gang labor, and this process of involuntary servitude continues today. The genocidal Confederate general Nathan Forrest, infamous for the Fort Pillow massacre of African Union troops and one of the founders of the Ku Klux Klan, contracted for the labor of such a group of black prisoners in 1871 to build the Selma-Memphis road. The Memphis-Charleston Railroad was also built in this way.


A NEW SYSTEM
OR
CHAIN-GANG SLAVERY
IN GEORGIA.

Little girls and boys under ten years of age are sent to chain-gangs for three potatoes or singing Shoo-fly, with great locks and chains around their necks; colored bogusly-convicted women and men are let out for ten cents per day to do out-doors work that

In Georgia, as well as in other Southern states, many businesses were operated with African labor held in this type of legalized slavery. U.S. senators as well as governors made fortunes from such labor. Convict labor in the South means African labor. In 1880, Georgia had 1,071 Africans and only 115 North Americans serving prison time. Southern novelist George Cable describes the system: "Here may be seen a group of penal institutions, the worst in the country by every evidence of their own setting forth: cruel, brutalizing, deadly; chaining, flogging, shooting, drowning, killing by exhaustion and exposure."[20] The fortune of Georgia Senator Joseph E. Brown was made by his Dade County Coal Mines, for which he leased 300 convicts for 20 years from the state, paying only 7¢ per day to the state.[21]

*Prisoners cleaning the streets for U.S. President Hayes*

The use of prisons and chain gangs to enforce the colonial conditions of African people is central to the transformation from the slave system to the system of colonialism. During the period of chattel slavery there were no Africans in prison, as these institutions were used as a means of disciplining the white labor force while Africans were held under the armed control of the individual planters. Indeed, during this period the U.S. itself was clearly the prison for black people. With the abolition of slavery, the 13th Amendment to the Constitution included the phrase that involuntary servitude could be permitted for those held in prison. Immediately the prisons began to fill with Africans. Immediately the organization of many Southern business enterprises, as well as the majority of Southern public works, was



dependent on convict labor. While African convicts did not get paid, they continued to create values, to make products of social use which were sold at a profit. Those who controlled this labor and took the profits were the capitalists. So in reality, the South after the Civil War was extracting profits from African labor through control of a peasant economy as well as through a legalized and modernized system of slavery, which was duly inscribed on the official laws of the land, from the 13th Amendment to the land and labor laws of the South.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1905 estimated that the market value of goods produced for capitalist markets through convict labor was $34 million, with $12 million of that being value added by the labor of the prisoners themselves. The labor thus extracted, and most of this was from African laborers in the South, was greatest because the compensation paid to the laborer did not consider tne amount needed to survive, much less to reproduce. Prison contractors estimated that in the South, one black man in prison will produce as much wealth as two or three on the outside.[22] Assuming that even as many as 1/3 of the prisoners were North American for these statistics, we could drop the estimate of value created exclusively by African convict labor to $8 million per year. We would then conclude that roughly $600 million, or over half a billion dollars, was produced in this way between the Civil War and the Second World War.

Prisons served a further function than the extraction of wealth, however, in representing, as always, official state terror against the African population. They operated at a profit for the capitalists and at the same time protected the fabulous profits being taken through the debt peonage system by providing an example and cruel social discipliner for African rural workers. Besides the constant threat of official prison slavery and the widespread use of the death penalty, African workers faced the extra-legal but widely sanctioned terror of the lynch mob. Beginning with the defeat of Black Power in 1876, white Klan riders carried on a reign of terror similar in scale and horror to the pogroms of Czarist Russia and the ongoing genocidal wars against the Native people of the U.S. In the first two decades after the Civil War, at least 10,000 Africans were killed in these attacks. From 1884 to 1900, 2,500 Africans were lynched. In

1900 more than 100 Africans were lynched by white terrorists. By 1915, there had been 1,100 documented lynchings in the 20th century. By 1919, the number had risen to 1,300.[23]

### Social Services And Education

While the merchants were gouging African workers for every penny that could be extracted, it was the State and federal government, representing the overall interests and strategy of the capitalist class, which conspired to keep African workers in the most underdeveloped position that colonialism could devise. Throughout the South, the black side of town was known as the side where streets weren't paved or lighted, garbage wasn't picked up, and medical care did not exist.

The decisions referred to above in the development of Southern education provide a good example. Schools are a key social service in increasing productivity of workers, raising the value of "human equity," and opening the door to better jobs. M. Kousser points out that Africans were receiving the beginnings of primary education after the Civil War under the Reconstruction programs.[24] But by the end of the



19th century, when Africans were disenfranchised and repressed by the government, African tax dollars were actually going to support the education of white children. As Claudia Goldin concludes, "The state, not the merchant, was the racist strong-arm of the people."[25]

In 1898, Florida's per capita cost of education, that is the amount spent for each student, was $5.92 for whites and $2.27 for black children. In Mississippi, in 1900, the per capita expenditure was $22.25 for whites, $2 for Africans.[26] Under this educational system, the capitalized value of the white labor force increased during the century after the Civil War while it decreased for Africans.

### Summing It Up

As we trace the history of the oppression of African people, we are exposing the underpinnings of the operation of capitalism. Clearly, the capitalists did not just sit down in a room and decide how they would set up the slave system and then later they would transform it to modern colonialism. It is the drive for profits, and the adaption of the system of production that offers the greatest immediate profit, that defines the capitalist history. In the 16th century, the merchants could not possibly conquer other peoples and force them to labor and extract resources for them. They did not have the power to set up such modern colonies. But they did come up with the system of kidnapping laborers to work in colonies headed by settlers from Europe. This was the first, primitive, form of European colonialism and gave birth to capitalism.

When the Africans overthrew the system of slavery, the capitalist class groped for new relations and ways of extracting wealth from Africans. By establishing a system of labor which tied the Africans to the land, forced us to extract cash crops from the land, and took these resources to the industrial center for transformation in the factories, the capitalists established modern colonialism. Having achieved this development of technique, and having amassed tremendous wealth for 300 years, the capitalist class was prepared to extend the system of colonialism around the world. Only in the 19th century, and especially at the end of that century, were the capitalists of Europe and the U.S. able to spread their conquests to every corner of the globe. As anticipated by the conditions in the domestic African colony, the colonial system was able to force laborers to

work as peasants, slaves, and beasts of burden to provide raw materials to the foreign rulers.

As we shall see in the next chapter, the domestic African colony exposes how capitalism is maturing to its outer limits. As the colonized African population is more and more proletarianized, pulled into manufacturing and distribution of goods, and moved out of the realm of simply providing raw materials for the North American working class to transform, the final decadence of the imperialist core is foreseen. More and more, the North American centers are closing down factories and moving them to the colonies. North American society is being prepared to limit its economic activity to service and clerical work. The domestic African colony is the proving ground for the proletarianization of the colonial work force, a phenomenon which is accelerating throughout the world and is also the burning forefront of the clash of the colonized peoples of the world with U.S. imperialist power.

From 1870 to 1890, the maturing of the colonial relationship of African people to the U.S. occurred through, first, the system of official apartheid and violence and, second, the complex mechanisms of economic control. This system of economic control meant that African people held the worst jobs and were forced to turn over what little income they did receive at exorbitant rates to the merchants and received virtually no social services or training.

In *The Review of Black Political Economy,*[27] Richard America estimates that African people have lost $15 to $20 billion per year only through the mechanism of wage and salary discrimination in the 20th century. In factoring in the impact of prisons, of the gouging by merchants, and of lack of social services, we are safe to estimate the higher figure, $20 billion, for the years up to World War II and including at least the last third of the 19th century as well. Calculating 75 years (1865-1940) at $20 billion per year gives $1500 billion ($1½ trillion) as the amount of stolen labor. With this rough estimate, we can conclude that the African domestic colony has been the greatest profit producer in the period of the rise of U.S. imperialism as compared to all its other colonies and economic dependencies. This reveals, again, that U.S. capitalism was not a benign white system for a certain period of time and then went out into the world in search of profit. The primitive accumulation of capital off of African people continued to be an essential underpinning of the



capitalist system, and a prime source of profit, right on through into the 20th century. Some ways this profit was extracted changed in important ways, but its essential character, whether it is called primitive accumulation or colonialism, remained the same.

The wealth taken from African people, combined with that extracted from other subject peoples, was the basis of the boom of American industrial capitalism. The myth of capitalist wealth being based on great inventions and business know-how is shattered when we see the increasing exploitation of the peoples of the world and our increasing underdevelopment and poverty, progressing apace with the expansion of the vast wealth of the capitalist center. Reparations of the $1½ trillion for this period must be added to the reparations of $600 billion for the period of slavery, to give a total thus far of $2.1 trillion.

## Chapter Four

# Adapting Neo-Colonial Exploitation to the Domestic African Colony, 1945 to 1982

### THE NEW DEAL

After the First World War, U.S. imperialism was riding high. The entire world had been divided among the capitalist nations, the U.S. had come out of the war as the rising power in the world and, except for the threat of socialism which had found a foothold in Russia, her power seemed secure. But by the early 1930's, imperialism was facing new challenges and was going through fundamental transformations. The transformations were accomplished through the crisis of the Great Depression. Bourgeois historians often describe this as a crisis which simply happened to capitalism and over which businessmen had no control. In fact, the Great Depression was caused by a decision by the major corporations that were not able to increase profits sharply enough under the economic structure which had numerous small and medium sized enterprises each competing for survival, and which saw the whole agricultural sector operating through small family size farms. By precipitating a crisis in the stock market and commodity exchange market, these corporations created a situation in which thousands of businesses were ruined, tens of thousands of farms were sold for bankruptcy, and millions of workers were dislocated.

It was not all bad news for the capitalists, however, for this was the period in which a much greater concentration of capital was achieved, and with the ruin of lesser capitalists came the modernizing of the economy. The depression years were when the Empire State Building, the San Francisco Bay Bridge, the Golden Gate Bridge and many other mammoth construction projects were accomplished, when the irrigation of California's Central Valley and the establishment of the first giant agribusiness farms

was completed, and when U.S. control of Latin America, much of Africa and the Pacific was consolidated.

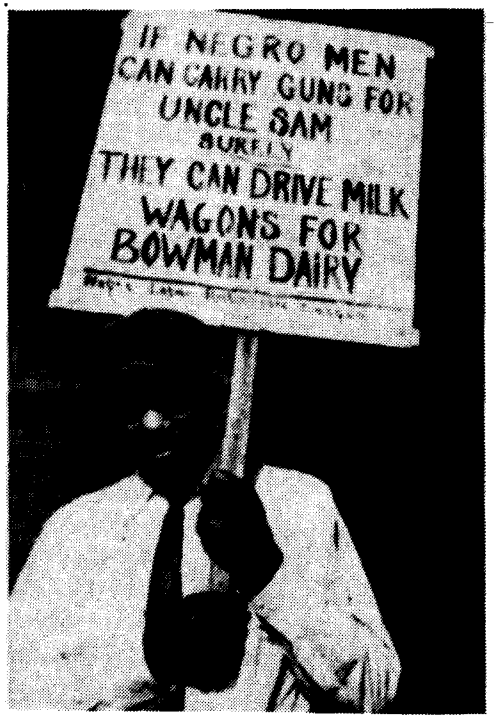
These were also the years in which colonized people all over the world were rejecting imperialist control and fighting for self-determination and independence. White workers in the capitalist centers were likewise disillusioned and in rebellion against the capitalist system. Clearly, the old form of colonialism was not going to survive. In response, U.S. planners and managers modernized their concept of economic and social planning.

In economics, they turned to John Maynard Keynes, who adapted the scientific evaluation of the sources of wealth, the workings of the market, and the material basis of currency values which came from Marx, to bourgeois planning systems. The main impact of Keynesian economics was to assign the imperialist State a much greater role in managing the overall operation of capitalism and in controlling the economy through massive taxation and spending. On the social front, the U.S. government offered the North American workers a "New Deal" under Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a deal which would be hard to turn down since it incorporated many of the demands which had dominated the trade unionist working class struggle of North Americans for the previous 100 years: unemployment insurance, minimum wage laws, and the right to organize trade unions. In short, it was the institutionalization, through official government sanction, of the opportunism which had characterized the white left from the beginning and which marked the dismal failure of the Communist Party-U.S.A. in providing revolutionary leadership in the struggle for socialism.

Where was the material support for this "new deal" to come from? Why didn't the old captains of industry at the turn of the century offer such a new deal instead of carrying out bloody strike-breaking attacks? Because what they couldn't do in 1916 they could do in 1936. By 1936, the structures of imperialism had succeeded in concentrating such a huge amount of capital in the imperialist center, had put to work and extracted vast tribute from such broad expanses of colonized people throughout the world, that they were in a position to make a settlement with the North American working class which was unprecedented. The New Deal for North American workers was based on the centuries of wealth ripped off from African people inside the U.S. and



from the growing expanse of colonies throughout the world. The North American left in the 1930's had mobilized and seized control over millions of African workers in the South and in Northern cities, only to use our impetus as a bargaining chip in their overall settlement with capitalism. This betrayal reconfirmed African people's understanding of our need for independent political action and organizing, and led to the tremendous Black Revolution in the decades after World War II.




While capitalism offered the New Deal to North American and European workers, what was capitalism's plan for the colonies? The same scientific managers, the ex-socialists and even current white socialists who helped strategize the survival of capitalism, came up with a sanitized and streamlined version of colonialism. This new form, which was 20 years in the constructing, was dubbed by Kwame Nkrumah as neo-colonialism. It consisted of granting the colonies formal independence, setting up puppet native comprador bourgeois classes whose existence depended on their successful delivery of local wealth and lives to the imperialist sponsors, and building an economic structure which firmly shackled the material life of the colo-

nies to the demands of the colonial center. This kind of adaptation was necessary in the colonies, just as the ending of chattel slavery was necessary in the previous period, because of the rising and resistance of the most oppressed themselves. The rise of the Garvey movement in the 1920's represented the stongest expression of this in the domestic African colony and among Africans all over the world. Garvey mobilized millions of Africans in the struggle for freedom and independence. In addition, these years saw the rise of the Pan-Africanist movement as well as the participation of black workers in such struggles as the Sharecroppers Union in the U.S. South.

In responding to the crisis, however, capitalism managed not only to survive but to devise means for extraction of more wealth, which is always necessary for the continuing survival of capitalism. As Walter Rodney points out in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa,* the economic relation to the colonies meant that the solution to the crisis in the capitalist centers was found by deepening the exploitation of the colonies through currency devaluations, speeding up the extraction of raw materials, and dropping the amount of money paid for exports from the colonies.

For African people in the U.S., the rise of neo-colonialism and the changes in the form of exploitation had its own particular character in the domestic colony. The first step of this transformation was to move more and more African peasants off the land and into the position of proletarians, urban workers in the central section of most U.S. cities. This move did not mean abandonment of the dual labor market, as African workers came in to fill the lowest rungs of the industrial North. While the majority of African people remained in the South, the industrial boom of the Second World War caused the capitalists to call up increasing numbers to fill factory, hauling, and service jobs in the North. During the 1940's, 160,000 African people per year were relocated in the North by the needs of the capitalist market. In 1940, 77 percent of African people were in the South and 22 percent in the North, while in 1950, there were 68 percent in the South and 32 percent in the North. By 1960, it was 60-40 and by 1969 it was 52-48.[1]

The proletarianization of the African domestic colony is dramatically revealed by the movement to the industrialized North, but it is not simply a matter of geographical region as much as the location in the economic system that is important here. The movement to the cities, and movement from production of primary raw materials to manufacturing and servicing those materials in the later stages of commodity production, has continued dramatically in the last decades. Whereas in 1970 there were 7 major cities with a majority black population, by 1980 there were 17 cities in which Africans predominate.

***1943 victim of white mob.***

The second step in this transformation from domestic colony to primitive neo-colony has been the rise of the black petty bourgeois leadership. Just as Britain groomed African and Indian leaders to take over nominal power under a false independence, U.S. capitalism began to put forth its crusading negro heroes who needed to win the support of the black masses and exact some concessions from the old colonial structures in order to move African workers into proletarian labor. Some may question if this is truly neo-colonialism since these petty bourgeois leaders were not

calling for even nominal independence the way the reformists of the British colonies did. But it must be remembered that different colonial particularities called for different forms of neo-colonialism. If the British Foreign Office put forth a strategy of granting independence within a "commonwealth," the French and Portuguese did no such thing. Their mode of modernizing their colonies was to call for integration of the colonies into the motherland, thus declaring Algeria and Indochina a part of "Greater France" and installing puppets such as the Emperor Bao Dai who called for integrationism and sought to administer the colonies under such a system. Of course, even if France had succeeded in integrating its colonies, including placing representatives of the subject peoples in the French parliament, they would continue economic extraction and exploitation at an increasingly efficient rate.

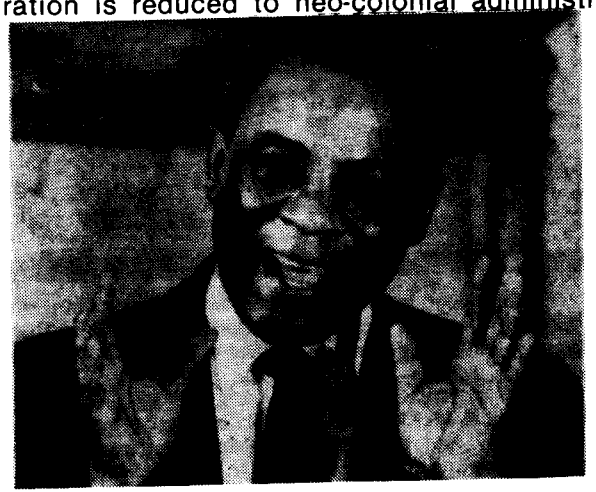
Likewise, for the African domestic colony in the U.S. it was necessary for the ruling class to avoid open acknowledgement of the colonial relation by even granting nominal independence. The black primitive petty bourgeois leaders were charged with the task of championing integration while proposing themselves as spokesmen for the oppressed African people. In fact, among the black primitive petty bourgeoisie there were contending factions. The most reactionary, such as Booker T. Washington, advocated a passive population primarily remaining in the South and were aligned with the reactionary North American bourgeoisie such as Teddy Roosevelt. The liberal primitive petty bourgeoisie, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, were aligned with and sponsored by the liberal North American bourgeoisie and encouraged aspirations among Africans to move North and seek new opportunities. As the New Deal represented the ascendancy of the liberal bourgeoisie and their strategy, the NAACP and its offshoots such as the Urban League grew in influence and strength.

We describe the structure which was constructed after the Second World War as "primitive" neo-colonialism in order to underline the fact that the domestic African colony did not have a truly developed national bourgeoisie, was never able to initiate any significant national economic activity. The whole product of African labor continued to be funnelled into the coffers of the North American ruling class. Those few Africans who did rise to a so-called



bourgeois position were simply placed in charge of sections of North American corporations concerned with improving the penetration and extraction of wealth from the African community. The black petty bourgeoisie has its own distortions in being entirely at the mercy of the North American ruling class and so has never even established itself as an independent petty bourgeois sector of any significant size. Therefore it is a primitive petty bourgeoisie, and the form of colonialism is primitive neo-colonialism.

As Africans are concentrated in the cities, and the character of the cities decays from the robust centers of production during early colonialism to the desperate colonial manufacturing centers of today, we find the concept of Free Enterprise Zones being put forward by the ruling class. These zones will be the cities themselves, and will mean that Africans in these cities will be obliged to work with subsurvival pay rates, no job security, no safety regulations, no organization. With the movement of the black population to the cities and the movement of North Americans to the suburbs, the black primitive petty bourgeoisie is granted narrow control of city governments. Whereas there were only 4 black mayors of the 7 cities with black majority in 1970, by 1980 there were 17 major cities with a black majority and of these there were 13 headed by black mayors. But the nature of power has shifted. Where once the mayor was a powerful office and political machines in cities like Chicago were known as president-makers and breakers, now the city administration is reduced to neo-colonial administration.



***Philadelphia Mayor Wilson Goode represents neo-colonialist leadership.***

With the flight of North Americans from the cities, the tax base within the cities is reduced. While Africans physically occupy the cities, the ownership of the property remains in the hands of North Americans, outsiders, who determine the economic life. Therefore, the political control of the black primitive petty bourgeoisie is responsible to protect the rule of white property. The revolutionary anti-colonial struggle of Africans increasingly turns to the struggle for community control, for African people to seize the property we occupy, to take the cities which we now are located in. With a population that is 94 percent working class, the struggle for community control by Africans in the U.S. is therefore also a struggle for worker's control.

These two steps, then, the proletarianization of the African labor force and the establishment of a black primitive petty bourgeoisie, represent the beginnings in the 1940's of the primitive neo-colonialist form of exploitation. Just as under early colonialism, however, African people owned nothing of the means of production and were subject to the commands of the North American center. While many of the white colonialists of the left have been satisified to declare that colonialism once existed for African people but somehow withered away under the beneficent guidance of the imperialist ruling class, a look at the real world, at the statistics, at the conditions of colonial terror, will prove that colonialism, while it has developed in important respects, retains its essential character of being a labor-intensive extractive base for imperialist profits.

In the proletarianization of the African domestic colony, we can also see how modern imperialism has created its own grave-diggers. Indeed, it may be instructive to note that, upon subjugating the African population, European and North American imperialism has destroyed African development processes and forced African people through a series of changes in the forms of exploitation which reflect, as a mirror image, the history of the development of European and North American society itself, from slavery to peasantry to proletariat. We shall see how this development of the forms of exploitation also has meant an increasing degree of exploitation, that is, greater profits being derived from the labor of African people. With the proletarianization of the African colony, however, imperialism has placed our people in the position it did not occupy during the great uprisings against slavery, for now we are placed in a critical



position in North American cities as well as connected with world-wide forces in such a way that the struggle of African people for independence and socialism sees us poised to seize the very means of production, to destroy imperialism utterly.

The proletarianization of the African domestic colony has further implications, for it shows that once again the form of exploitation of African people anticipates the forms that will be adopted around the world and African resistance shows the way to confront that exploitation. Just as slavery and the development of the domestic colony preceded extensive colonialism around the world, the maturing of the African domestic colony to the point that we are 94 percent proletarian today has pointed the way that the exploitation and resistance is developing around the world. In the first place, the conditions of Africans in the U.S. have shown the way imperialism uses massive unemployment in the periphery, in the colonial sector, in order to create a working class that is unattached and underpaid for whatever jobs are offered. The rate of unemployment of African people in the U.S. since the 1930's far surpasses unemployment rates of European and North American workers even in the cruelest periods of the existence of capitalism. Secondly, the development of the African proletariat has pointed out a critical development of imperialism in its final, most decadent phase. Whereas early imperialism saw the extraction of raw materials from the colonies—cotton, copper, bauxite, rubber, etc.—for the factories which were placed in the imperialist centers and employed skilled white workers, today manufacture itself is being exported. The growth of the working class in the colony does not mean it has ceased to be a colony, only that the capitalists, in their drive for profits, could not resist the option of establishing industry in the colonies. The "runaway shop" which fled North American unionized sectors of the U.S. and set up in African cities such as Birmingham or Houston, the free enterprise zones where manufacture is going full steam in Taiwan, San Salvador, and Cape Town, are the wave of manufacture of the future. The white steel worker who was laid off in the recent economic crisis is not coming back, that job is gone. The projection for North American society is that 90 percent of the work force will be clerical by the 1990's, that service jobs and the paper work of administering the empire will take up the focus of nearly all North

Americans.

The African domestic colony was well on its way to becoming proletarian in the 1950's while many external colonies, such as Guatemala, Thailand, or Zimbabwe were still largely populated by semi-peasant colonial subjects. As the imperialist economy moves from simply extracting raw materials to extracting and then manufacturing right in the colony, the forms of urban resistance will become the anti-colonial strategies of the 1980's. The imperialist dream for the year 2000, of a white center reposing on its riches while the colonized people of the world struggle to provide them with material comforts, will never come to pass. For the proletarianization of the colony, while inevitable in capitalism's drive for profits, is fatal to the survival of colonialism.

## WAGE DIFFERENTIAL

There are endless ways one might approach the problem of determining the amount of wealth stolen from African people under the neo-colonial structures of modern imperialism. The important thing is to demonstrate that there is a concrete, material difference between the conditions of North American workers and those of African workers as well as showing the substantial colonial profits which are derived from that difference. While many of our *Marxists* today seek to obscure the distinction and include the exploitation of African workers in their overall statistics on working class exploitation, it was left to *liberal* sociologists who were making economic assessments of the nature of the crisis during the Civil Rights Movement to study the objective data on the components of the exploitation of African people.

This research confirmed that the economic basis of colonialism for African people had by no means disappeared. Such works as *Poverty in a Rural Economy* by A. Dale Tussing, *Internal Labor Markets and Manpower Analysis* by Peter Doeringer and Michael Piore, and *The Economics of Poverty and Discrimination* by Bradley Schiller confirm the observation by 19th century economist J.M. Cairnes on the existence of a "dual labor market." Or as Harold Baron and Bennet Hymer observe concerning Africans who have moved into the Northern proletarian jobs:

> Within this standard sector, Negro workers are often segregated by firm and within firms by job classification or production unit. The size of this sector is generally determined by the extent to which past or present labor shortages have allowed the entry of Negro workers into areas where previously just whites were hired. Currently, approximately half the Negro labor force is in this category.[2]

And referring to those Africans who have stayed in the traditional jobs besides tenant farming, they say:

> Workers in the surplus sector who have jobs occupy positions that are at the very bottom of the occupational ladder. These jobs are low paying, involve dirty and unsafe work, are often of short duration, and have little advancement potential. Many of these jobs are assigned to the Negro labor force only as the white labor force advances into higher occupations. Traditional Negro jobs like boot-blacks, car washers, busboys, washroom attendants, porters, and servants are positions that through custom have gradually formed an area of employment exclusively for Negroes or other minority groups, *regardless of employment conditions elsewhere in the labor market.* (emphasis added)[3]

This shows that while there is some overlap in job categories, for the most part African and North American workers occupy different jobs. While police terror, the movement of African people into the worst run-down housing in urban areas, and massive unemployment all serve to confirm colonialism as the condition facing Africans in the U.S., the dual labor market is a critical demonstration of the material workings of colonialism. The proof of the dual labor market, however, only underlines the fact that colonialism exists in the U.S. and that it must be attacked as an overall system. To reduce the wage differential to a matter of discrimination on the job gives rise to schemes for wage equality struggles which fail to confront the entire colonialist system, and end up reinforcing the neo-colonialist structures of the capitalist class. Therefore, the wage differential must be reviewed as evidence of the degree of exploitation but not as an isolated problem which can be legislated away by a reformed capitalism. If capitalism has

shown anything, it is its tenacity and willingness to change forms only to maintain colonial exploitation.

The dual labor market, domestic colonialism, means that African people suffer two to three times the poverty levels as the white population and the number of families considered below poverty level would be greatly increased if we rejected the unreal government cut-off level of $5,000 for a family of four. It means that African workers are unemployed at levels five times those of the North American community, which was 33 percent in the African community in 1966 when you count all those workers who had given up looking for work and has risen dramatically since then.[4] It means that for the 432 Small Business Administration loans made between 1954 and 1963, 7 went to African people. It means that African people are given much lower training levels than North Americans, that you will see the upwardly mobile universities with a 2 percent African enrollment while the nearby community colleges are 80 percent African—a condition that has not changed since the 1960's—and in fact today there are more African people in prison than in college in the U.S. When African students go



out into the job market, and can only find work at the lowest rungs, even when it is so-called white collar work, their lifetime earnings will be considerably less. African workers with a high school education will make 60 percent of what a white worker with a high school education will make and African workers with a college degree make only 47 percent of whites with a college degree. Even more shocking, Africans with a college degree will be making less than whites with only an 8th grade education.[5]

Domestic colonialism means that African workers do not draw the money necessary for survival and reproduction from the social security system. Sixty percent of black men with 25 years of working tenure draw less than $150 a month on retirement (compared with 30 percent of white workers with such a low draw). Most Africans work their whole life at low wages and are forced to retire because of ill health, therefore lowering benefits; then, many black workers continue working after retirement despite illness. As retired workers, Africans are under-represented in the ranks of those drawing social security pensions because they die at a younger age (facing an average life span 7 years shorter than North Americans). And because African workers hold more hazardous jobs, they are over-represented among workers who are disabled. Black children whose parents have died only draw 67 percent of what white children in the same circumstances get.[6]

All of these statistics show the many costs to African workers of domestic colonialism and the dual labor market. These costs all mean greater profits derived by the capitalist class, profits that are essential to the smooth working of the metropolis. African people who have been taken off the land and proletarianized, in fact, produce more wealth for capitalism than they did under the stages of slavery/primitive accumulation and peasantry/early colonialism. The African proletariat in the U.S. domestic colony is the source of huge profits and at a rate which is increasing. Between 1975 and 1980, supposedly five good years in the U.S. business cycle, real income for white families gained some $1304 while black family real income declined by $128. The number of white families classified as poor was down by 2 percent while the number of black families falling into this category increased by 22 percent, while employment rates got worse for Africans in every category.[7]

***Being poor is not just a statistic, it takes its toll in human suffering and lives***

Many aspects of the measure of the profits to capitalism are difficult to make. For example, the "underground economy" that plays a huge role in the African colony—off the books cleaning jobs, under the table sales and services, etc—is all profitable and all



unreported in the official statistics. We are forced to fall back on the most broad measure of at least the degree of wealth which is stolen from African labor through examining income differentials between the African and North American population.

Income differentials do not measure the cause of poverty, do not consider if education discrimination, seniority rules, hiring and firing practices, or other factors were the cause of the problem. Indeed, there are endless studies which seek to determine the contribution of these and other factors to the income differential for black workers. But these techniques for operating the colonial economic structures must not be put forward as the cause of the problem since we know the critical factor is colonialism which maintains control over African people through force and violence. As we explain in the Creed of the African People's Socialist Party (Our Basic Party Line): *"This rule of our people by foreigners and aliens for the purpose of exploitation is colonialism, the most barbaric form of economic relationship and government in the world today. It is an economic and governmental form which distorts social development and denies collective economic development through forcibly and arbitrarily molding our social and economic activity in a manner designed to perpetrate and serve the dominant U.S. capitalist economic and social system to which we are illegitimately tied and from which we are irretrievably estranged."*

Nevertheless, income differentials can give a sense of the amount of wealth that has been stolen from African people solely because we are African. During the period of African urbanization and proletarianization, the income of African people was only an average of 57 percent of the income of North Americans, that is 57 cents to every dollar earned by a white worker. This figure had a slight rise from 1950 to 1973 (54 percent to 58 percent) but this could hardly be considered a trend, since in fact it had risen to 61 percent in the late 60's when the Black Power Movement was threatening U.S. power and demanded improvements which were temporarily made in certain wage sectors. But by the mid-70's, the figure had dropped again and has continued to decline until African people today suffer conditions that are not significantly different than in the early 50's when the agitation for civil rights began.

**Median Family Income by Nationality inside the U.S.[a]**
**Selected Years 1950-1973**

| Year | North American | African | Ratio of blacks and other races to whites percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1950 | 3,445 | 1,869 | 54 |
| 1955 | 4,605 | 2,549 | 55 |
| 1960 | 5,835 | 3,233 | 55 |
| 1965 | 6,251 | 3,994 | 55 |
| 1969 | 9,794 | 5,999 | 61 |
| 1970 | 10,236 | 6,279 | 61 |
| 1971 | 10,672 | 6,440 | 60 |
| 1972 | 11,549 | 6,864 | 59 |
| 1973 | 12,595 | 7,269 | 58 |

In making a concrete evaluation of the amount of wealth stolen from African people through colonial exploitation during the period of urbanization and proletarianization, we can make a more precise measure than we did by using Richard America's estimate of wealth stolen in income differences in the last chapter because in 1947, the U.S. first began to collect data on wage levels by nationality. By making some estimates for missing statistics and to include the years for which data are not yet reported, we can get a complete picture. By measuring the number of households supported by a worker, and multiplying it by the

income differential, we can determine the gross difference in wages between the black and white population. This difference is then translated to 1982 dollars by use of the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The following table, taken from *Historical Statistics*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Series G31-138 and G1-15, gives us an estimate of $1.474 trillion in wage differential between 1947 and 1979 by adding up the right hand column and converting to 1982 dollars:

**Chart of Income Differentials, 1947-1979**

| YEAR | DIFFERENCE between black and white incomes (families and individuals) in dollars. | NUMBER of black income units (in thous.) | DIFFERENCE in current dollars (in thous.) | DIFFERENCE in constant 1967 dollars (thous.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1947 | 1597 | 4091 | 6,533,500 | 9,734,637 |
| 1948 | N.A. | 4294 | 6,750,000(a) | 9,382,000 |
| 1949 | N.A. | N.A. | 7,250,000(a) | 10,150,000 |
| 1950 | 1704 | N.A. | 8,000,000(a) | 11,120,000 |
| 1951 | N.A. | N.A. | 8,750,000(a) | 11,287,500 |
| 1952 | N.A. | N.A. | 9,500,000(a) | 11,970,000 |
| 1953 | N.A. | N.A. | 10,250,000(a) | 12,812,500 |
| 1954 | N.A. | 5208 | 11,000,000(a) | 13,640,000 |
| 1955 | 2208 | 5339 | 11,788,512 | 14,736,064 |
| 1956 | N.A. | 5310 | 12,000,000(a) | 14,760,000 |
| 1957 | N.A. | 5515 | 13,000,000(a) | 15,470,000 |
| 1958 | N.A. | 5613 | 14,000,000(a) | 16,100,000 |
| 1959 | 2594 | 5812 | 15,076,328 | 17,337,377 |
| 1960 | 2433 | 5855 | 14,186,665 | 16,030,921 |
| 1961 | 2627 | 6019 | 15,811,913 | 17,709,342 |
| 1962 | 2813 | 6080 | 17,103,040 | 18,813,344 |
| 1963 | 2797 | 6230 | 17,425,310 | 18,993,587 |
| 1964 | 2721 | 6395 | 17,400,795 | 18,792,858 |
| 1965 | 2920 | 6451 | 14,529,858 | 20,701,649 |
| 1966 | 3034 | 6539 | 19,839,326 | 20,236,112 |
| 1967 | 2919 | 6816 | 19,895,904 | 19,895,904 |
| 1968 | 3109 | 6922 | 21,520,498 | 20,444,473 |
| 1969 | 3459 | 7194 | 24,884,046 | 22,644,448 |
| 1970 | 3418 | 7357 | 25,146,226 | 21,625,754 |
| 1971 | 3524 | 7752 | 27,318,000 | 22,400,000 |
| 1972 | 3965 | 8212 | 32,561,000 | 25,723,000 |
| 1973 | 4199 | 8632 | 36,246,000 | 27,184,000 |
| 1974 | 4272 | 8889 | 37,974,000 | 25,822,000 |
| 1975 | 4389 | 9102 | 39,949,000 | 24,768,000 |
| 1976 | 4818 | 9493 | 45,737,000 | 26,527,000 |
| 1977 | 5333 | 9926 | 52,935,000 | 29,114,000 |
| 1978 | 5470 | 10,222 | 55,914,000 | 28,516,000 |
| 1979 | 6234 | 10,527 | 65,625,000 | 30,188,000 |

By adding up the right column and converting to 1982 dollars, we come up with a wage differential, $1,474 billion or $1.474 trillion. This must be interpolated in order to account for the amount of money stolen from 1945 to 1947 and from 1979 to 1982. A very conservative estimate, therefore, of the wage differential for the whole period 1945 to 1982 is $1,750 billion.

**Shortcomings of the Wage Differential Analysis**

We have used the wage differential to get a rough estimate of the extra profits from colonialism. The examples above of social security discrimination, the underground economy, and many others show that it is a bare minimum. In addition, we must conclude that the wage differential is only one quantitative measure of the contradiction and should not be used to reinforce the standard white left demand for wage equality, for a mechanical campaign against the differential. But colonialism is a whole relationship, enforced by the armed might of the oppressor nation, which cannot be reduced to income discrimination.

To show other ways that colonialism operates economically, other ways that profits are extracted, we must briefly look at other areas of the colonial relationship.

**1) Dual Housing Market.** African people are moved in and out of different neighborhoods at the will of the real estate capitalists and the city planners. Primarily, African workers

***Elderly woman (left) next to her box home—Miami, Florida 1983***



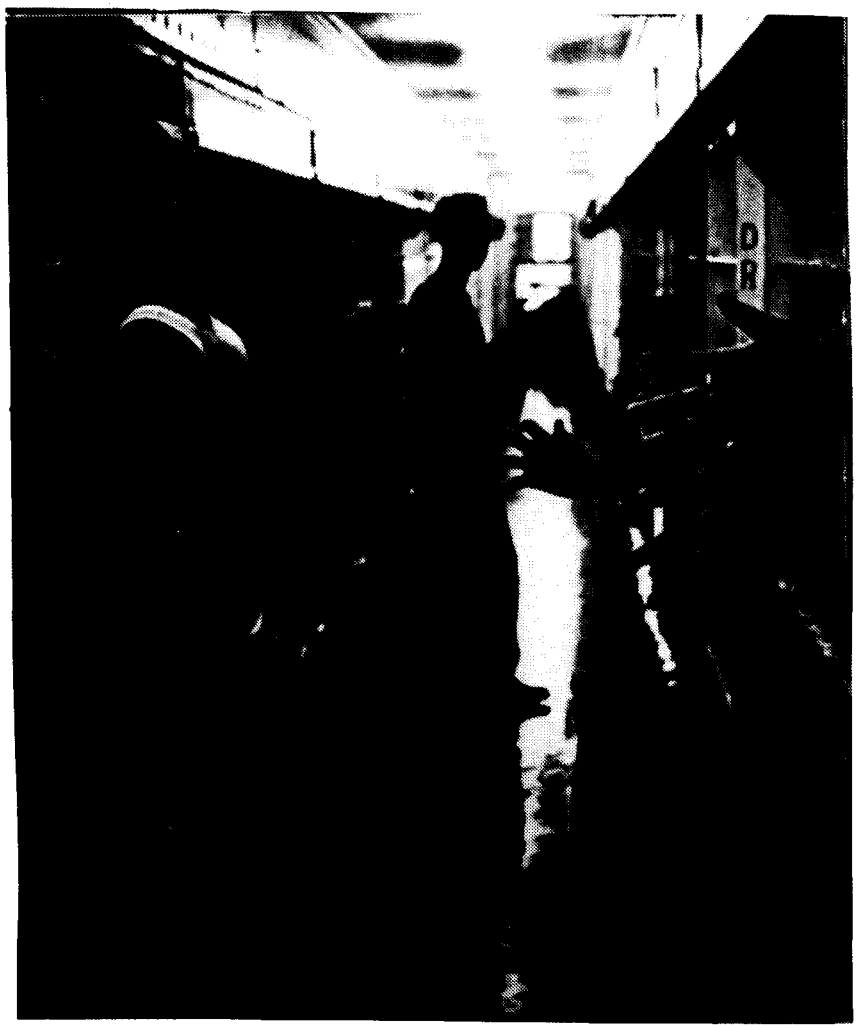
are put in decaying neighborhoods and forced to pay top dollar to enter houses that have passed the peak time of their usefulness. In the urban areas today, even though 4.4 million white people have left for the more secure suburbs between 1970 and 1978 and the black population increased by only 778,000, there are thousands of African people without homes (36,000 in New York alone) because realtors conspire to burn down whole neighborhoods. It has been estimated that, even though African people occupy the worst dwellings, we are forced to pay at least 10 percent extra over costs to white people for the privilege of living there.[9]

**2) Community Services.** Black communities in the United States suffer from entirely different services. Garbage collection, utility services, street and sewerage quality are all notoriously below the kind of services that are regularly expected in the North American community.

**3) Price Structures.** The African community in urban centers of the U.S. represents a captive market very similar to the market monopolized by the Southern country store in the previous decades. This market is captive because African lack of mobility precludes "shopping around" and because the lack of resources means that African people are subject to the worst credit terms, terms that are especially designed to get maximum profits off the poor. Such studies as *The Poor Pay More* by David Caplovitz show that in African communities durable goods are sold with the highest markup and the lowest quality.[10] Credit is advanced easily but repossession is a common sight in the community, taking back goods that have been ½ or ¾ paid for. Because of this, the Federal Trade Commission has had to estimate that African people pay 50 percent more for merchandise.[11] According to Knowles and Presitt, it is a 52 percent premium. In food prices, Anthony Downs shows that black people get lower quality food and pay a higher price than in the North American community.[12] In addition, the African community is filled with fast food stores and liquor stores, with a higher proportion of small stores and worse quality in the chain store products offered.

**4) And More.** African people receive completely different medical care, as shown by Victor Fuchs in *Who Shall Live?*[13] and by the struggles of such groups as the Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality which expose the scandalous infant death rate as compared with that in the nearby white com-

munity. Land loss through market and legal manipulation has been progressively developing in the 20th century for Africans. Prisons have continued to serve the primary function of terror, putting away the young, rebellious, and resistant elements of the African community, in which one of every four black men will spend time during his life. Prisons also continue to operate many capitalist enterprises on involuntary servitude labor, from furniture making to tanning leather



***"Don't be shocked when I say I was in prison—you are still in prison! That's what America means—prison..." Malcolm X***



## Conclusion

# Summary of Reparations Owed by the U.S. Government

By adding even a small amount for the other ways that African people have been ripped off besides the wage differential between 1945 and 1982, we can increase our estimate of what modern imperialism has stolen from $1.75 trillion to $2 trillion between 1945 and 1982. Added to the previous totals, then, we arrive at a sum total of $4.1 trillion, 4100 billion dollars, owed by the U.S. government and capitalist class for reparations to African people.

The workings of capitalism have always required that African people be maintained in a subservient status, maintained outside the North American economy where skilled labor carries out the final tasks of production, the realm of the North American proletariat and capitalist. This subservient status, which was extended to the whole world 100 years ago, is the real basis for capitalist profits. African people's oppression has changed forms over the years. The progression of this oppression shows that capitalism freely adapts every type of exploitation in order to amass capital; whether it bears resemblance to the historical periods of slavery, peasantry, or wage labor, it is all part of the capitalist mode of production. Indeed, such adaptation is as much a part of the history of capitalism as is wage labor.

In the first period, slave labor was utilized as the central factor in the primitive accumulation of capitalism, freeing up $600 billion (1982 dollars) in profit for the capitalist class. In the second period, the rise of colonialism, African people were transformed to peasants. While peasant labor exploitation represented an advance over slave labor in the eyes of many, in fact it resulted in more efficient and thorough exploitation of African labor and thus greater profits being taken, a total of $1.5 trillion or $1500 billion from 1865 to 1945. In the third period, with the development of primitive neo-colonialism, the African colony was transformed to the point where today 94 percent of Africans in the U.S. are workers, with at least $2 trillion in colonial profits taken by the capitalist class in this brief period. This ex-

ploitation foretells the proletarianization of colonies throughout the world and the ultimate decadence of the imperialist centers. When you break it down to the amount of wealth extracted per year, you may see even more dramatically how the exploitation rate of the African colony has increased with the growth of capital. During slavery, the capitalists extracted about $2.5 billion (in 1982 dollars) per year; during early colonialism, this figure averages out much higher, to $20 billion per year extracted, or 8 times more than the previous period. And during modern primitive neo-colonialism, the capitalist class has extracted $54 billion per year, or 2.7 times as much as the previous period and 22 times as much as during chattel slavery. This far surpasses the rate of population growth, which has increased tenfold since the period of chattel slavery.

The transformation of the last thirty years, however, and the formation of the African colony into a proletarian colony, has had two results. First, African labor is more efficiently exploited and greater profits derived. Second, African proletarians have come forward as a class with the vision and the capacity to once and for all overturn the cruel system of colonialism. The transformations of history, the continuing resistance of African people causing continual changes in the material reality, are fact. But primitive accumulation/colonialism/primary extraction persists. The terror persists, the dual labor market persists, the territorial monopoly on consumption persists—colonialism persists. African people have fought 400 years against these conditions and are now poised to take on the whole structure of exploitation, U.S. imperialism.

In calling for reparations, in building the African National Reparations Organization and organizing for Bread, Peace, and Black Power, African people are building a massive struggle to win independence, to defeat imperialism in its very belly. The attempts by some members of the North American left to declare colonialism over and call for African workers to fall in behind their leadership is a betrayal of internationalism and of the real struggle for socialism. An example is the attempts by the petty bourgeois parties to make the central response to the current imperialist crisis a demand for jobs. They defend this tailing of the liberal bourgeoisie of the Democratic Party with the most simplistic economism. It is interesting that the North American leftists are now concerned about jobs when their



unemployment rate approaches 8 percent, while we have suffered twice that even in the best periods of capitalism. They want their jobs and privileges back, and call for full employment. African people know that this alone means nothing. Under slavery, we certainly had full employment, worked from age 8 to our deaths in our 40's and 50's. $4.1 trillion reveals that the only just struggle is the anti-colonial struggle, the only demand for freedom must demand reparations.

Likewise, those North American leftists who came forth with a proposal for Africans to regroup in the South in the so-called Black Belt South are only trying to turn the clock of history backward. They seek to hook up with certain dissatisfied petty bourgeois elements in the African community, the dissatisfaction of the uprooted peasant, the petty bourgeois longing for the past, not unlike the petty bourgeois revolutionism which Marx exposed in the ex-peasants of France. The call for reparations does not mean regrouping African people on the poor worked-out farm land of the South in an American version of the Bantustans. The U.S. African colony persists and has maintained its strategic connections among African people all over the world building the international African anti-colonial struggle. The African domestic colony has matured to a proletarian colony in a position to seize control of the cities and countryside and the heart of the U.S. to demand the whole pay back. The African working class has produced the necessary forward motion and strategy in the proletarian leadership of the African People's Socialist Party, which is taking responsibility to lead the working class to smash entirely the system of colonialism, to throw out entirely the capitalist class from power.

All of the petty bourgeois political schemes have in the center the so-called multi-national analysis, claiming that the whole working class, African and North American, is involved in a single contest with capitalism. Such an argument is used to mask their attempt to place African people's struggle under the leadership of the white petty bourgeoisie. In all of these schemes, African people's condition is reduced to a matter of race, of some biological and non-political myths. This analysis is no different for the economist trade unionism of the North American left parties, the isolated revolutionism of the Black Belt South practitioners, and the liberal integrationism of the Democratic

Party. They all defend colonialism.

This study has undertaken to determine how much reparations is owed to African people by the U.S. government and ruling class for 400 years of oppression. In exposing this history, however, it has done much more. We have shown that the primitive accumulation of capital was a process of theft from African people which began when the early bourgeois merchants set up slave forts on the African coast in the 15th century and which has continued to this very day, spreading around the world as the brutal system of imperialism. We have demonstrated that the wealth stolen from African people, and later from all colonized people, constitutes not a side contribution to capitalist profits but the very basis of capitalist wealth. We have reviewed the changes that have occurred in the form of exploitation of African people and how the resistance of African people has forced the oppressors to abandon each successive form of exploitation. And we have shown how the domestic African colony is now strategically located and self-conscious to take on the task of overthrowing U.S. imperialism itself, to lead a struggle which will unite the efforts of Africans all over the world and mobilize all progressive and revolutionary classes and nations whose interest is in the overthrow of U.S. imperialism.

By understanding the essential character and workings of colonialism, by understanding the position and mission of the African working class, our people are armed with the truth, which is critical for a successful, revolutionary struggle. As Marx himself said, theory, when it grips the masses, is invincible. The demand for reparations, the campaign for $4.1 trillion in reparations as defined in this study, goes to the very heart of the contradiction, sums up the historical oppression of the African colony and the ways that this oppression has been the cornerstone of imperialist profits. Reparations is central to resolving the colonial oppression of African people and throwing down the capitalist class to their rightful place. The African People's Socialist Party and the African National Reparations Organization is now providing the programs and working class leadership for the anti-colonial struggle of black people in the U.S. which leads the entire struggle for socialism.

*African People's Socialist Party led demonstration in Oakland, California, February 1983*

## Appendix

# General Program of the African People's Socialist Party

### I. Basic Party Line

**"All our work is guided by our understanding that our struggle for national liberation within U.S. borders is an integral part of the whole African Liberation Movement; that the African Liberation Movement itself is a part of the great contest between the ever-emerging forces of international socialism and the dying, but not yet dead forces of imperialism; that the particular character of the African Liberation Movement within the U.S. is a struggle against U.S. domestic colonialism; that the destruction of colonialism, led by a conscious black revolutionary socialist party, will constitute the critical blow in the struggle for socialism within U.S. borders."**

***—Chairman Omali Yeshitela***

**1. All Our Work Is Guided By Our Understanding That Our Struggle For National Liberation Within U.S. Borders Is An Integral Part of the Whole African Liberation Movement.**

The African Liberation Movement is one of the oldest liberation movements in the world. It began many centuries ago, when the first European businessman put his foot on the Continent of Africa and forced an African person to do something against her/his will.

The centuries-old attack on Africa resulted in the control of African land, resources and people by foreigners and aliens, and the forced dispersal of millions of Africans to foreign lands throughout the world as slaves.

The problems of African people today are related to the present under-population of Africa which is the result of the violent kidnapping of our people and the alien control of our land and resources. Our problems also stem from the genocide and oppression we, the survivors of this kidnapping, have to endure in the various foreign lands we have been dumped in for the exploitation of our labor power.

The struggle of black people within current U.S. borders is a struggle for national liberation, the liberation of our whole people; it is an integral part of the African Liberation Movement presently occurring on the Continent of Africa itself.

The struggle for national liberation within current U.S. borders, therefore, does not have its origins in anything which occurred within the U.S., but is an integral part of the whole African Liberation Movement which began in Africa and was transported to various other sectors of the world, including the U.S.

**2. The African Liberation Movement Itself Is A Part Of The Great Contest Between the Ever-Emerging Forces of International Socialism And the Dying, But Not Yet Dead, Forces of Imperialism.**

The African Liberation Movement is not alone in its struggle against Western and U.S. imperialism. It is a part of the great movement that involves millions of people throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the progressive forces within the Western imperialist countries themselves.

This earth-shaking struggle against national oppression, subjugation, and economic and social injustices, is one which unites the overwhelming majority of the world's population against Western and U.S. imperialism, the oppression of nations by nations for the sake of profits by financial capital, the banks, and the giant blood sucking corporations which work in alliance with them, stretching from one end of the globe to the other. This struggle by the world's peoples against imperialism represents the greatest threat to production and rule for profit. Its success will bring forth a new day with a new economic and social order, one that will see the toiling masses of the world assume our rightful places as owners of the products of our labor and the collective determinants of our own fate and destiny.

Such a struggle represents the ongoing process of the growing move by new historical forces to replace the outdated and repressive old historical forces. Such a struggle represents the great contest between the ever-emerging forces of international socialism and the dying, but not yet dead, forces of imperialism.

**3. The Particular Character of the African Liberation Movement Within the U.S. is a Struggle Against U.S. Domestic Colonialism.**



Within current U.S. borders, the struggle for African liberation has a special character. It is a struggle to free ourselves from the terror, poverty, and oppression, which are caused by being ruled in a foreign land by a foreign and alien power, the primary intent of which is to exploit our labor power for the benefit of the U.S. capitalist system and at the expense of collective economic and social development of our people.

This rule of our people by foreigners and aliens for the purpose of exploitation is colonialism, the most barbaric form of economic relationship and government in the world today. It is an economic and governmental form which denies the indisputable human right of self-government. It is an economic and governmental form which distorts social development and denies collective economic development through forcibly and arbitrarily molding our social and economic activity in a manner designed to perpetrate and serve the dominant U.S. capitalist economic and social system to which we are illegitimately tied, and from which we are irretrievably estranged.

The colonial domination of our people is unusual and rare in history. It is not the same as the domination of our people as we know it in Africa, where foreigners came to our national homeland and through the use of terror imposed their will upon us on our own land. The colonial domination of our people within current U.S. borders is different; it is not settler-colonialism, which is colonialism that results from people leaving their own native land and setting up an oppressive foreign government which oppresses the traditional occupants of the land in order to exploit them.

U.S. colonialism for African people within current U.S. borders is domestic colonialism.

As African people, forcibly transported to a foreign land by European settlers, also foreign to the land, it is our primary responsibility to struggle for the liberation of Africa, our national homeland, by waging a fierce battle within current U.S. borders against U.S. imperialism and for independence in our lifetime.

**4. The Destruction of Colonialism, Led by a Conscious Black Revolutionary Socialist Party Will Constitute the Critical Blow in the Struggle for Socialism Within U.S. Borders.**

Many peoples within current U.S. borders are struggling against U.S. imperialism in various of its forms, the Native

People are also struggling against U.S. settler colonialism, for sovereignty, and for control of their land. The Chicano/Mexicano people are struggling against U.S. oppression of their people, as are the heroic Puerto Rican and other subject people.

The U.S. North American (white) working class has a class contradiction with U.S. capitalism, and it is within its objective interests to join with the struggles of other subject peoples in the struggles against U.S. imperialism.

The vast majority of the peoples within current U.S. borders who are exploited and oppressed by U.S. imperialism are working peoples, the toiling masses who produce much of the value which constitutes U.S. wealth.

However, the class struggle which unites us, the struggle which stems from the contradictions caused by private ownership and socialized production, is not of equal significance to us all in all its aspects. While the primary contradictions confronting the U.S. North American working class have their basis in the contradictory relations to the means of production, the primary contradiction confronting African people within the U.S. is a colonial contradiction, one which thrusts most of the various primitive class formations in objective contradiction to U.S. imperialism.

Because of its settler-colonialist character, the primary responsibility of the North American working class, whose main contradiction with the U.S. capitalist-colonialist ruling class revolves around questions of class, is to build international working-class solidarity with the toiling subject and colonized peoples within current U.S. borders for the purpose of resolving its colonial contradictions with them in its drive to seize control of the means of production from its ruling class and build a socialist society.

Socialism is an economic and social system which is superior to capitalism. It is a system which will ultimately lead to an end to war, the exploitation and oppression of humans by humans, national chauvinism, and the oppression of nations by nations.

Socialism throughout the world is a necessary prerequisite to the end of national divisions; it offers humanity the possibility of a world community for the first time in history.

Therefore, socialism is an economic and social system which is in the interest of all the toiling masses of the world, in Africa, and in the U.S. But just as the struggles for national liberation throughout the world and Africa represent the sharpest, most decisive threat to imperialism internationally, the African-led struggle against domestic colonialism within current U.S. borders, represents the death blow to U.S. imperialism.



The U.S.-based struggle for national liberation, aiming its sharpest blows at the U.S. state apparatus, the institutions of coercion which protect and promote the U.S. capitalist system, is like a time bomb implanted in the heart of a giant enraged and dying beast.

A successful anti-colonial struggle for national liberation by African people within current U.S. borders will have to necessarily smash the coercive state apparatus which is directly responsible for our subjugation and oppression, and which stands menacingly in the way of the ability of the toiling masses to seize control of the means of production and build socialism within current U.S. borders.

Throughout our history as captives within current U.S. borders, African people have consistently resisted foreign domination, and our struggles have acted as catalysts for struggles for other peoples for progressive social change, and presented the U.S. government and the system it serves their greatest threat.

Because of the antagonistic and irreversible contradictions African people have with U.S. imperialism within current U.S. borders, and because of the great size of our population, having resisted all forms of genocide, the U.S.-based African struggle to destroy colonialism, led by a conscious black revolutionary party such as the African People's Socialist Party, will constitute the critical blow in the struggle for socialism within current U.S. borders.

## II. Fourteen Point Platform

### 1. WE WANT PEACE, DIGNITY, AND THE RIGHT TO BUILD A PROSPEROUS LIFE THROUGH OUR OWN LABOR AND IN OUR OWN INTERESTS.

We believe that the U.S. North American government and society were founded on the genocide of Native People, the theft of their land, and the forcible dispersal, enslavement, and colonization of millions of African people. We believe that the present condition of existence for African people within current U.S. borders is colonialism, a condition of existence where a whole people is oppressively dom-

inated by a foreign and alien state power for the purpose of economic exploitation and political advantage. We believe further that this colonial domination is the primary basis of the problems of African people within the U.S. and that we shall know neither peace, prosperity, nor human dignity until this colonialist domination is overthrown and the power over our lives rests in our own hands.

**2. WE WANT THE RIGHTS TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CREATIVE AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT WHICH PROMOTE THE NEEDS AND WELL BEING OF OUR ENTIRE PEOPLE.**

We believe that colonialism is a blood sucking system which causes all economic development to benefit the colonialist ruling class state and society at the expense of our colonized people. We also believe that the massive, habitual unemployment and underemployment of our people benefit the U.S. colonialist ruling class and capitalist system and that a struggle by African people for jobs must be combined with a struggle for socialism and independent economic development.

**3. WE WANT AN END TO ALL LOCAL, STATE, FEDERAL, AND OTHER TAXATION OF BLACK PEOPLE BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AND ANY OF ITS AGENCIES.**

We believe that such taxation is illegitimate, that black people have no real or meaningful authority within the U.S. government, and that U.S. taxation of African people is therefore taxation without representation. We believe that in the absence of such real or meaningful authority we have nothing to say about how such monies are used, and that therefore the taxes taken from black people are often used against us and other oppressed and exploited peoples within the U.S. and around the world.

We believe that the use of taxes extracted from the African population to build more prisons to stuff us in and to hire more police to kill us with is criminal, as is the use of these taxes to hire soldiers to intimidate and plunder peoples oppressed by this same system internationally. We also believe African people must refuse to pay taxes to a government which uses such taxes to prop up and support brutal dictators around the world who keep their own peoples oppressed and living in squalor in order to maintain U.S. and Western imperialist economic and political domination.



**4. WE WANT THE RIGHT TO FREE SPEECH AND POLITICAL ASSOCIATION, A GUARANTEE OF THE RIGHT TO WORK FOR THE BETTERMENT AND EMANCIPATION OF BLACK PEOPLE WITHOUT FEAR OF POLITICAL IMPRISONMENT AND THE LOSS OF LIFE, LIMB, AND LIVELIHOOD.**

We believe that the liberation of African people throughout the world will come primarily as a result of our own efforts. We believe it is our duty to our mothers and fathers, our children and ourselves, to organize ourselves to overcome our oppression. We believe that the rights to organize and speak out against our oppression are basic human rights and that the U.S. government must discontinue its attempts to smash these rights and must discontinue criminal attacks on those African patriots who work for the betterment and emancipation of our people.

**5. WE WANT THE RIGHT TO INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION WITH AFRICANS AND ALL OTHER PEOPLES ANYWHERE ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH.**

We believe that all black people are African people and are a part of a single national entity. We believe that the genuine freedom of African people everywhere is irreversibly linked to the creation of an independent, united, and socialist Africa. We believe the struggle of African people within the U.S. represents the U.S. front of the worldwide movement of African people for African liberation, political independence, and socialist democracy. We believe that the worldwide struggle for African liberation is in unity with the struggles being waged by the majority of the peoples of the world to end the oppression of nations by nations and to create a new world, within which the toiling masses will end the system of workers and bosses and slaves and masters and will own and benefit from the means and products of our labor and will have political authority over our own lives. We believe that the natural, objective friends of our struggle for African liberation, independence, and socialist democracy are all the toiling masses of the world—the people of the Middle East, the Asian and Latin American peasants and workers, the democratic forces throughout Eastern and Western Europe and the U.S., and the truly socialist states of the world, and that we must therefore have the absolute right to free political and economic international association.

**6. WE WANT THE IMMEDIATE AND UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF ALL BLACK PEOPLE WHO ARE PRESENTLY LOCKED DOWN IN U.S. PRISONS.**

We believe that all the African men and women who are locked down in the U.S. concentration camps commonly known as prisons are there due to decisions, laws, and circumstances which were created by aliens and foreigners for their own benefit and as a means of genocidal colonialist control. We believe that these decisions, laws, and circumstances were created and are enforced without our consent and are therefore illegitimate. We believe that the African men and women who are locked down in these concentration camps are victims of U.S. colonialist ruling class justice which maintains our enslavement and terrorizes our people, and that they should therefore be released immediately to the just representatives of our struggle for liberation, independence, and socialist democracy.

**7. WE WANT COMPLETE AMNESTY FOR ALL AFRICAN POLITICAL PRISONERS AND PRISONERS OF WAR FROM U.S. PRISONS OR THEIR IMMEDIATE RELEASE TO ANY FRIENDLY COUNTRY WHICH WILL ACCEPT THEM AND GIVE THEM POLITICAL ASYLUM.**

We believe that U.S. prisons are also used as the illegitimate tool for torturing, murdering, and holding captive those courageous daughters and sons of Africa who through their patriotic deeds or spoken or written words in support of the cause of our liberation have become political prisoners and prisoners of war. We believe, along with the majority of the peoples of the world, that it is the duty of the colonized and enslaved to resist slavery and colonialism and to fight for socialism and those who do so are patriots and heroines and heroes and should be held in the highest esteem.

**8. WE WANT THE IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL OF THE U.S. POLICE FROM OUR OPPRESSED AND EXPLOITED COMMUNITIES.**

We believe that the various U.S. police agencies which occupy our communities are arms of the U.S. colonialist state which is responsible for keeping our people enslaved and terrorized. We believe that the U.S. police agencies do not serve us, but instead represent the first line of U.S. defense against the just struggle of our people for peace, dignity, and socialist democracy. Therefore, we believe the



U.S. police is an illegitimate standing army, a colonial army in the African community and must withdraw immediately from our community, to be replaced by our liberation forces whose struggles in defense of our community and against our oppression demonstrate their loyalty to our community and their willingness to serve in its interest.

**9. WE WANT AN END TO THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL OPPRESSION AND ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION OF AFRICAN WOMEN.**

We believe in the absolute, unequivocal, political, social, and economic equality of African women and men. We believe that a fundamental test of the progressive or revolutionary character of any organization, party, movement, or society is its commitment, confirmed in practice, to the destruction of the special oppression of women and the elevation of women to the rightful place as equal partners and leaders in the forward motion of the development of human society and as leaders, makers, and shapers of human history.

**10. WE WANT THE RIGHT TO BUILD AN AFRICAN PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY.**

We believe that true freedom, although often taken away, can not be given to a people. We believe that African people are our own liberators, and that we have a right and obligation to build an African People's Liberation Army to defend our political gains, our freedom fighters and communities, and to win our actual freedom from our oppressive colonial slave masters. We believe that neither meaningful freedom, nor guaranteed political and social gains, nor genuine liberation are possible without the assuring existence of an African People's Liberation Army. We believe further, that the only legitimate wars are wars of national liberation, and wars to oppose imperialist aggression, and that therefore, the only legitimate military forces for black people to serve with are military forces which defend liberty and repel imperialist aggression. Such a force would be the African People's Liberation Army.

**11. WE WANT THE U.S. AND THE INTERNATIONAL EUROPEAN RULING CLASS AND STATES TO REPAY AFRICA AND AFRICAN PEOPLE FOR THE CENTURIES OF GENOCIDE, OPPRESSION, AND ENSLAVEMENT OF OUR PEOPLE.**

We believe that U.S. and European civilization were born from, and are presently maintained by, the horrendous theft of human and material resources from Africa and its people. We also believe that this theft of human and material resources is responsible for the present under population and underdevelopment of Africa and her people and the political servitude, material impoverishment, and cultural discontinuity and disintegration of African people throughout the world. We believe that Africa and African people are due reparations, just economic compensation, billions of dollars which must be paid to the Organization of African Unity or any other legitimate international organization of African people, for equitable distribution for the development of Africa. We also believe that reparations must be distributed to the various independent African states dispersed throughout the world, and to the legitimate representatives of African people forcibly dispersed throughout the world who have not yet won liberation.

**12. WE WANT AN END TO THE VICIOUS, SELF-SERVING U.S. AND WESTERN EUROPEAN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND MILITARY INTERFERENCE IN THE AFFAIRS OF AFRICA AND AFRICAN PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.**

We believe that African people in Africa and elsewhere have a right and responsibility to solve our own problems, free from the unwanted, and self-serving interference of U.S. and Western imperialists. We believe that the U.S. and Western imperialist interference in the affairs of our people is designed to maintain the continuation of the theft of our human and material resources and our oppression and impoverishment.

We believe that African people must be free to organize and struggle for an end to colonialism and neo-colonialism without interference from U.S. and Western imperialism which supports neo-colonialism and colonialism in Africa, the U.S. and elsewhere, and which has deposed progressive and revolutionary African leaders and replaced them with neo-colonialist stooges.

**13. WE WANT AN END TO U.S. COLONIAL DOMINATION OF AFRICAN PEOPLE WITHIN THE U.S.**

We believe that the primary struggle of African people within the U.S. during this period is to throw off the alien U.S. colonial domination which is responsible for virtually every



hardship imposed on black people by this government that is identifiable as a "black problem."

We believe that our problems with education—from our inability to control our own schools and determine the education of our own children, to the inferior and racist quality of the education we do receive—are caused by colonialism. We believe that our problems with health care—from the absence of black controlled and operated health clinics and institutions throughout our communities to the hazardous health conditions imposed on us by poverty and callous government decisions—are caused by colonialism.

We believe that our problems with housing—from the unavailability of decent and adequate housing for the majority of our people, to the delapidated and vermin-infested housing we are forced to live in—are caused by colonialism.

We believe that our problems with food and clothing—from the terrible quality and quantity which are imposed on us by blood sucking merchants, to our inablity to produce and distribute them for and among ourselves—are caused by colonialism, where our whole people is dominated and oppressed by a foreign and alien state power for the purpose of economic exploitaton and political advantage.

**14. WE WANT THE TOTAL LIBERATION AND UNIFICATION OF AFRICA UNDER AN ALL-AFRICAN SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT.**

We believe that "the total liberation and the unification of Africa under an All-African socialist government must be the primary objective of all Black revolutionaries throughout the world. It is an objective which, when achieved, will bring about the fulfillment of the aspirations of Africans and people of African descent everywhere. It will at the same time advance the triumph of the international socialist revolution, and the onward progress toward communism, under which every society is ordered on the principle of—from each according to his (her) ability, to each according to his (her) needs."—*Kwame Nkrumah*

# Footnotes

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# Biographical Note

**Omali Yeshitela** (Joseph Waller) is the Chairman and co-founder of the African People's Socialist Party as well as the founder of the Party's main political organ, *The Burning Spear* newspaper. Chairman Yeshitela, 41, has dedicated the past 20 years of his life to the struggle of his people for independence, liberation and socialism against the U.S. imperialist system. Long based in the South, his strong and uncompromising leadership has taken the form of consistent and militant activism and agitation over the years on all of the many pressing issues facing black people in the U.S. today.

Chairman Yeshitela has contributed profoundly to the theoretical development of the Black Liberation Movement in this country and around the world. He has developed the understanding that racism is the ideological expression of colonialism which is the major contradiction facing U.S. African people, and he has shed significant light on the role that capitalist primitive accumulation, slavery and colonialism play in the present condition and tasks before African people everywhere and particularly in the U.S. Yeshitela has brought clarity to the relationship of black people to U.S. imperialism, as well as to the North American working class, and to the Native, Puerto Rican and other colonized populations inside this country. Most of his speeches and papers have been featured in *The Burning Spear* newspaper over the past thirteen years.

A tireless internationalist, the Chairman has done much to bring about the revolutionary unity of African people around the world and has forged the bonds of international solidarity of African people to all of the world's oppressed, colonized, struggling peoples and underdeveloped and socialist nations.

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**Rick Ayers** and **David Barber**, research assistants, are members of the Committee In Solidarity With African Independence, a North American solidarity organization which works directly under the leadership of the African People's Socialist Party to build material and political support among North Americans for the U.S. based African Independence struggle.

# About the African People's Socialist Party

The African People's Socialist Party is the organization which initiated the work of the International Tribunal on Reparations for Black People in the U.S., which brought the history and conditions of black people before the world on November 13 and 14, 1982, with a demand for reparations amounting to $4.1 trillion dollars for unpaid and underpaid labor alone. Chairman Omali Yeshitela initiated the founding of the African People's Socialist Party through a merger of three revolutionary and militant black organizations in 1972. During its first decade of existence, the African People's Socialist Party has provided theoretical and practical leadership for the African Independence Movement in the U.S. Its work has led the movement from the near decimation because of the U.S. government's counter-intelligence attacks (COINTELPRO) which were followed by an ideological assault by the North American petty bourgeois forces who proclaimed themselves as the left, to the current advanced ideological and political development, organizational strength and ability to call the International Tribunal and form a national mass organization, the African National Reparations Organization.

Since its formation, the African People's Socialist Party has published *The Burning Spear* newspaper. Widely read nationally and internationally, *The Burning Spear* has long been the most consistent source of news and African Internationalist analysis available. Today *The Burning Spear* is the only regularly issued revolutionary black newspaper still published in the U.S.

As the "Black Working Class Party With The Common Sense Line" the African People's Socialist Party has consistently attempted to build strong working relationships with sister revolutionary parties of national liberation struggles around the world. The African People's Socialist Party has always given unconditional support to national liberation struggles in Africa, Asia, Latin America and wherever oppressed people are fighting the yoke of U.S. imperialism. Currently, the APSP has initiated a call for and is attempting

to help build the African Socialist International which, in the heritage of Marcus Garvey, will bring together African people dispersed throughout the world as part of the struggle for genuine independence, for African unity and for world socialism.



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